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Should Israel Be A Theocracy?

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Daniel H. Gordis

The Zolli Case

Wallace P. Sillanpoa
and
Robert G. Weisbord

Two Jews—Freud and Gay

Benjamin Goodnick

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JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

Problems of Religion and State in Israel

The complex and difficult character of the relationship of religion and the state in Israel is a persistent cause of friction and hostility both within the State and in world Jewry. For historical reasons that appear ever less compelling, the religious Establishment, which is right-wing Orthodox in the extreme, enjoys a monopoly of power. It impinges on all of the citizens of the State in the area of personal status, including marriage, divorce and conversion, and has a profoundly negative impact upon diaspora Jewry, which constitutes 80% of the Jewish people.

That Conservative, Reform and secular Jews are increasingly vocal and active in protesting the status quo and the “scandals” which it creates continually is self evident and understandable. What is not generally known is that even within the Orthodox sector of Israeli society there is a growing recognition that the status quo is intolerable. Writing from a strictly Orthodox perspective, *Naomi G. Cohen*, a member of the Praesidium of new Religious Zionist Party, Meimad, analyzes the grave drawbacks of the status quo. She indicates that, far from advancing traditional religion, it weakens its appeal to the majority of Jews today.

What Is Judaism?

Even before Leo Baeck wrote his classic work, *The Essence of Judaism*, discussion among scholars and thinkers had been carried on with a double-barrelled question, “Is There An Essence to Judaism?” and “If There Is, What Is It?”

The implications of the issue are, of course, far-reaching. Moreover, the answer to the first question has by no means been answered unanimously in the affirmative. Drawing upon a rich variety of attitudes and approaches to be found within the Jewish historical experi-

ence, many significant thinkers have argued that there is no “essence of Judaism.”

In his paper, “Is There an ‘Essence of Judaism’ After All?” *Robert Goldenberg* maintains that whenever a significant number of Jews adopt a given position it becomes a legitimate expression of Judaism.

A Crucial Halakhic Problem

The incredible explosion of scientific discovery and technological advance in the area of medicine has spawned a vast literature dealing with the ethical aspects of the subject. A fair amount of this material seeks to approach these questions from the Jewish point of view.

Unfortunately, decision-making in many areas of bio-ethics today is merely formalistic interpretations of earlier texts that are cited as precedents. What is overlooked is that these decisions rested upon the best scientific and medical knowledge then available to the decisors. Obviously, they could not take into account the far-reaching advances in twentieth-century medical science and technology which their modern successors persist in ignoring in the name of “loyalty to tradition.” As a result, the intellectual integrity of the halakhic process is undermined and the wisdom and compassion inherent in the Halakhah are greatly compromised.

In his essay, “Wanted—The Ethical in Jewish Bio-Ethics,” *Daniel H. Gordis* points out some of the inherent weaknesses in this approach of many contemporary Jewish scholars. He argues that there are underlying philosophical and theological questions with regard to human personhood which must be taken into account *today* in dealing with problems of life, birth and death.

A Sense of History is Vital

Contemporary Jewish scholars and thinkers are much preoccupied today with the problem of the loss of Jewish identity among many Jews, particularly in the Diaspora. What is often overlooked, however, is that the same spiritual malaise characterizes large numbers of Israeli youth as well.

In his essay, “Israeli Identity in Crisis,” *Arye Carmon* describes the phenomenon and traces it to the widespread failure among many Israelis to identify with the historic past of the Jewish people before the rise of the State. Lacking these roots, their Jewish consciousness proves incapable of producing fruits. Hence, many of them develop an identity as Israelis, but not as Jews. Not only is their loyalty to their Jewish heritage gravely weakened, but the ties binding them to the Jewish people the world over is also undermined.

The author pleads for a deepened awareness of the positive ele-

ments of the Jewish past as an indispensable factor for re-creating a strong Jewish identity and a sense of kinship with Jewry everywhere.

More Insights Into the Book of Ruth

As has been pointed out time and time again, the depth and richness of the Bible are inexhaustible. In our day, all of the accepted modes of biblical interpretation are flourishing. The historian, the philologist, the archeologist, the anthropologist at one end of the spectrum, and the religious believer, the theologian, the philosopher and the student of literature at the other—all are contributing to our understanding of the Book of Books.

In addition, our age has witnessed a rebirth of the Midrashic method, which takes the biblical text on its own terms and explores its ramifications and the implications lurking behind the text.

In her paper, "Ruth—A Pure Dove of Israel," *Frieda Clark Hyman* reads the text anew and discovers layer upon layer of unsuspected meaning in it. She thus adds to the appreciation of this beautiful book which the ancient rabbis epitomized as *kullah hesed*, "all loving-kindness," and which one of the greatest of modern novelists has described as "the most perfect short story ever written."

The World Through Greek and Hebrew Eyes

Since the days of Matthew Arnold, it has been generally recognized that the two prime sources of Western civilization are Hebraism and Hellenism. Though emanating from small, weak nations, they have continued to exert a powerful impact upon the modern world.

From various points of view, historians, philosophers and theologians have sought to capture the essence of both cultures and the contrasts between them. In his paper, "Man and Universe in Greek and Hebrew Perception," *Mordecai Roshwald* contributes to this long-standing and fruitful dialogue. He presents his view of the fundamental difference between the Greek sense of an implacable Fate and the Hebraic faith in a just and wise God, as reflected in the classical literatures of both peoples.

The Background of the Zolli Case

In 1945, the Jewish world was rocked by the announcement that the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, had converted to Catholicism. Though the event stirred deep emotions everywhere, it became clear that many factors were at work in this tragic episode of a leader deserting his people during a major crisis.

The background of the Zolli affair, both in the personal life of the

main actor and in the convoluted conditions of the Jewish community in Fascist Italy and beyond, are explored by *Wallace P. Sillanpaa* and *Robert G. Weisbord*. Their well-documented study is being published as two papers. The first, "The Baptized Rabbi of Rome: The Zolli Case," appears in this issue of JUDAISM; the second, "The Zolli Conversion: Background and Motives," will appear in the next issue.

The Value of Holy Time-Off

One of the most influential exponents of Jewish nationalism earlier in the century was *Joseph Klausner* who was, in addition, a pioneer in the historical and critical study of modern Hebrew literature and was appointed Professor in that field at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Equally important in his career were his studies of the lives and careers of Jesus of Nazareth, the central figure, and Paul of Tarsus, the founder of Christianity, respectively.

His many-sided interests find expression in a paper, "The Sanctity of *Yom tov* and the Joy of the Sabbath," written a generation ago. We are indebted to Rabbi Simcha Kling for his sensitive translation of this essay, which has been somewhat abbreviated, but whose relevance to our day is clearly evident.

The Jewishness of Freud and Gay

It is probably true that in the entire German-speaking sphere in central Europe before the rise of Nazism, Vienna was the single most creative center, surpassing Berlin, Prague and other important cities. Here, more than anywhere else, the traditional Judaism of the East encountered the modernism of the West and produced a cultural efflorescence of extraordinary brilliance in the arts and sciences.

The greatest example of it is Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, and one of the seminal minds of the twentieth century. His life and, especially, his relationship—or lack of it—to Judaism and its tradition have been the subject of two recent books by Peter Gay, himself a brilliant representative of the German-Jewish symbiosis which came to a bloody end in the Nazi catastrophe.

In his essay, "Two Jews—Freud and Gay," *Benjamin Goodnick* discusses the Jewish consciousness both of the subject and the author of these two books and offers some interesting observations on each.

Two New Prayer Books

The various groups in Jewish religious life today present a bewildering, if not chaotic, picture, particularly to the uninitiated. The problem is complicated still further by the use of the same name by groups that are by no means identical.

Thus, in pre-Nazi Germany, Reform was ideologically, but not organizationally, close to American Conservative Judaism, while the religious left in Germany Jewry called itself "Liberal," though it was Zionist! In Great Britain, the "Established" form of Judaism is Orthodox and the Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue is the official representative of religious Jewry at ceremonial occasions. But the United Synagogue in Great Britain represents only one of three or four federations of Orthodox synagogues. Each of these is to the right of the other, and all regard themselves as independent of the Chief Rabbi. In Britain, Reform is closely akin to Conservative Judaism in America, while American Reform has its counterpart in Great Britain in the Liberal and Progressive groups. As for the divisions in the United States within Orthodoxy, Conservatism and Reform, they represent a broad spectrum of their own. Moreover, the United Synagogue in America is the federation of Conservative synagogues! This long introduction may help to orient the reader to the review-essay by *Elliot N. Dorff* on the two new prayer books recently produced by the British Reform movement. The writer surveys their contents and points up the resemblances and differences between the British Reform and the American Conservative prayerbooks.

R.G.

Theocracy and the State of Israel: Reflections of a Committed Religious Zionist

NAOMI G. COHEN

AS ALL OF US ARE WELL AWARE, THE EPITOME of religious Zionist ideology is the goal of the People of Israel, in the Land of Israel, according to the Torah of Israel. This, today, is generally understood in terms of using political machinery to ensure a maximum of *halakhic* observance in the public domain, in order to achieve as close an approximation as possible to the “rule of Torah.” The first step in this direction is the enthroning of *halakhic* authorities to be the directors of all of the actions of those who define themselves as committed to living as Torah-true Jews.

It is cogently argued, in support of this theocratic ideal, that, since all aspects of individual and communal life should be lived in the spirit and the letter of Torah, *da’at torah*, the authentic meaning of the Torah, resides in the contemporary religious authorities, who must be actively sought for guidance in all activities.

Clearly included are not only every aspect of *shabbat*, *kashrut*, *taharat hamishpahah* (family purity) et sim., but, also, social mores of all kinds and, as a matter of course, all decisions pertaining to the affairs of the community. In the State of Israel these include a broad spectrum of Knesset legislation—from the status of women to the status of territories.

It is pointed out that, since there are chapters in the classic Codes relating to all of these areas, they ought, as much as possible, to be subject to the detailed guidance of the *halakhic* authorities, who should be consulted on all matters, great and small, and followed without demur. Whether they be ministers, members of Parliament, or merely “private” citizens, Torah-true Jews of all “colors”—*Haredi*, *Dati-Leumi*, et al.—are increasingly being called upon to rely upon the decisions of the Rabbinic authority. Indeed, on the face of it, the bearers of the dream of the People of Israel, in the Land of Israel, according to the Torah of Israel, should rejoice at the degree to which organized religion has gained hegemony, not only directly over the religiously committed, but in the general arena as well, thanks to the significant po-

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litical clout which it has acquired. Nevertheless, many find themselves not at all happy and more than a little troubled.

Part I

What is a Theocracy?

The term Theocracy was originally coined by Josephus to describe government according to the Torah by means of a priestly class.¹ Since the *hakhamim*—the Sages—have long replaced priests in their legislative and judicial duties and prerogatives, we are justified in also using the term to describe government according to the Torah through the agency of the *hakhamim*—the Rabbis and the Roshei-Yeshivot. In terms of political theory, the epitome of this form is the Platonic ideal of the Philosopher King.²

At the other end of the spectrum from Theocracy, we find the ideal of the “separation of Church and State”—the principle upon which the American political system is based. Though often rejected out of hand, this principle is not necessarily entirely irrelevant to the central goal of religious Zionism, for it does not, in fact, remove religion from the public domain, nor is it inevitably a hindrance to the flowering of organized religion.

Experience shows that the very reverse of this may well be the case. In any event, we find that, in America, the classic instance of this system in practice, though there is no established church, neither are religion nor religious symbols and practices divorced from the state. In fact, outside of the major urban centers, America is probably one of the most religious countries in the western world.

The axiomatic acceptance of religion as part of the basic fabric of American culture is almost too obvious to need illustration.

1. Josephus, who apparently coined the term Theocracy, used it in *Contra Apion II* 165 as referring to the form of government which Moses gave to the Jewish people, in which “all sovereignty and authority are in the hands of God . . . (184) which assigns the administration of its highest affairs to the whole body of priests, and entrusts to the supreme high-priest the direction of the other priests . . . (187) . . . [T]his charge further embraced a strict superintendence of the Law and of the pursuits of everyday life; for the appointed duties of the priests included general supervision, the trial of cases of litigation, and the punishment of condemned persons . . .”

2. *Plato REPUBLIC V* 473: “Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy . . . cities will never have rest from their evils . . .” A Theocracy is the religious parallel to the state ruled by a “philosopher-king,” and Moses is, indeed, described with implicit reference to this statement of Plato, by Philo, (*The Life of Moses*), II 2): “For it has been said, not without good reason, that states can only make progress in well-being if either kings are philosophers or philosophers are kings. But Moses will be found to have displayed, and more than displayed, combined in his single person, not only these two faculties—the kingly and the philosophical—but also three others, one of which is concerned with law-giving, the second with the high priest’s office, and the last with prophecy.”

Nevertheless, we will bring a few random examples of religious expression in the public domain in America which immediately come to mind.

The motto, "In God We Trust," is engraved on American money. Representatives of the major religions deliver an invocation at the inauguration of the President. The major Christian holidays are celebrated in virtually all public places. The official day of rest is Sunday and though their stringency differs from State to State and from municipality to municipality, almost everywhere there are laws which regulate the opening of places of commerce and entertainment on this day.

Thus, despite the zealously guarded principle of "separation of church and state," the public domain in America is imbued with a specifically religious and, one might even say, Christian spirit. The "Church" is, indeed, separated from the State—but not religion, for this would reflect a positive attitude towards atheism—which is patently not what the founding fathers of the United States had in mind. Neither does it reflect the contemporary existential reality of the American people.

I repeat: though there is an attempt upon the part of some today to make it so, the separation in the United States between "Church" and the State, was not intended as a rejection of religion, nor is it usually so construed. Religion in the United States is not separated from the State—but no church can depend on government coercion to secure the adherence of its followers or the fulfillment of its precepts.

In Israel, today, some modification of this pattern may perhaps better serve the objective of ensuring a modicum of specifically Jewish forms of behaviour in the public domain than the system currently in force. What is even more important, though it is all too often forgotten, is that such modification will probably have more success than the present system does in keeping alive a love of Judaism and things Jewish in the hearts and souls of those Jews living in Israel.

Paradoxically, in Israel as it is today, some variation of the American pattern is more likely to advance the cause of religion than the English system of an "Established Church" which has been inherited from the days of the Mandate. Even less desirable is the rule of bodies of *hakhamin*, whether directly or through the agencies of political parties, which has long been the norm in *Haredi* circles and, it is to be feared, is in an advanced stage of introduction in the Religious-Zionist camp as well—with the Chief Rabbinate serving as the parallel to the Council of Torah Greats or the Council of Torah Sages.

This is, indeed, quite close to a Theocracy, if not identical with it. It is also the system current in many Arab counties, where no clear distinction is made between the religious and the political establishments.

*

Now for a short historical survey:

In the days of the First Temple, the division of functions between the political and the sacerdotal office holders, though not always preserved in practice, was, nevertheless, clearly demarcated. There was a religious establishment in the form of a regular Temple priesthood, upon whom fell the privilege and the responsibility of serving the sacramental needs of the people. Though it was closely connected with the monarchy and sometimes quite powerful politically, ultimate political power resided in the monarchy, while direct religious experience and, apparently, much of the spiritual guidance of the people, resided, not with the priesthood, but with the prophets—irrespective of whether or not they were of priestly lineage.

Similarly, at the very beginning of the Second Commonwealth we find Zerubabel of the Davidic dynasty, and Joshua, the High Priest, as the leaders of the first group to return to Jerusalem. And then, too, prophets seem to have been a far from negligible factor in contemporary politics.

Nevertheless, one of the striking realities of the Second Commonwealth is that, during most of its existence, it was both in name and in fact a "Theocracy." Thanks to the guidelines of the Cyrus Declaration, its political organization was that of a Temple State governed by a priestly aristocracy—who were, of course, presumably, the representatives of the Divine Prerogative.

At the same time, it is also abundantly clear that this was, in fact, conducive neither to a high spiritual level of the incumbent priestly families nor to the adoption of the Torah as the basis for behaviour by the people, the latter eventually occurring, in spite of, not because of, the local theocratic establishment.

It is perhaps not irrelevant to contemporary considerations to note that, although Ezra was of priestly lineage, both he and Nehemia entered the arena of religious revival in the theocratic State of Judea *from outside of the local established religious framework* and were, indeed, at serious loggerheads with it. They avoided disturbing the foundations of the theocratic government, perhaps because their authority stemmed from the very same Persian government which had established it.

This theocratic form of Temple-State, governed by the priestly aristocracy,³ continued undisturbed—as did so much else—after the

3. Note, for example, that in *The Letter of Aristeas* 35, which describes the origin of the Septuagint, Ptolemy, king of Egypt, is described as sending a letter to the High Priest, while the diplomatic usage is the one used for an exchange between sovereigns. (See the Dropsie College edition, edited and translated by Moses Hadas, 1951, note *ad loc.*, p. 112.). Whatever the date of the composition as a whole—and the tendency today is towards an early date—there is hardly any doubt that the author used authentic documents (see Naomi Cohen: "The Name of the Translators in The Letter of Aristeas. A Study in the Dynamics of Cultural Transition," *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, XV 32–64,

conquest of Alexander the Great. But it was no more conducive, in Hellenistic times than formerly, either to good government or to good religion.

Indeed, the nasty political intrigues of the House of Zadok, which eventually included the desecration of the Temple in the days preceding the Maccabean revolt, are a good illustration of how Judea could, at one and the same time, be a Theocracy—governed by the officiating priesthood—and, also, very negative from a Torah standpoint!⁴

*

What, then, is the ideal relationship among “established” religious authority, private religious institutions, and religion as a personal existential experience?

While all three foci are important, there is a natural tension in their interaction. Their relative strength can be measured according to two scales—one which is concerned with the degree of power, wealth, and coercion that is theirs, while the other relates to their influence on the minds and hearts of the community. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but neither do they necessarily go hand in hand.

Perhaps one of the secrets of the success of Judaism, over the ages, has been that none of these has ever either gained complete control or been entirely outlawed. When they are in a state of balanced inter-relation they serve to guard against both the excesses of arid formalism and the potentially anti-nomian tendencies frequently associated with “enthusiastic” religious phenomena.

Likewise, the existence of extra-establishment institutions during the course of our long history often served as salient correctives for the natural disintegration and decline imminent in all institutions—not excepting those of religion.

To put it somewhat more broadly: Religion, which is, by definition, of a spiritual nature, can exist in this world only when embodied in “material” forms—viz. organizational frameworks. Inherent in their very being and necessary to their functioning as bridges between the infinite and eternal, and the finite temporal here and now, is their material essence which is, by definition, like the human species and everything else “material” in this world—subject to birth, or growth, and senes-

notes 1–3). Another reflection of this are the coins found with the inscriptions: JUDEA and the name of the High Priest.

4. Not even the *Mityavnim*—the Hellenizers—wished to disestablish religion, for they had no intention of ceasing to be both rulers and priests. Nor would even the possible attempt on their part to turn Jerusalem into a Greek Polis (see Josephus, *Ant.* XII 237–241 and notes in Loeb ed.) have divorced the integral connection between “church” and “state” (though it would, of course, have changed the religious content). It was, after all, the Athenian polis which passed the death sentence on Socrates, on the grounds of religious non-conformity and corrupting the minds of the youth!

cence. One must be very careful not to subvert the natural mechanisms which bring about the renewal and eventual replacement of the time-bound elements of the religious establishment for, when these evolutionary processes are unduly thwarted, the results are often radical rebellion—both in former times and today—whose bitter fruits hardly require description.

In Hellenistic-Roman times the degeneration of the priestly religious hierarchy was almost certainly an important contributory factor to the spawning and spread of the manifold heterodoxies such as the Dead Sea Sects on the one hand, whose *halakhah* was, in many respects, more stringent than that of the Pharisees, and, on the other, anti-nomian Messianic movements.

At the same time, these charismatic, Rabbinic, and other “extra-establishment” groups (with which, during much of Second Temple times the priestly aristocracy was in a state of antagonism), but which functioned side by side with the priestly “establishment,” put brakes on the latter and eventually provided a viable substitute for it. It is hardly mere chance that the final eclipse of the Hasmonean dynasty, which, as long as it lasted, stood at the apex of both the religious and the political pyramid, and the rise of the house of Hillel and the Davidic Patriarchate, occurred at more or less the same point in time.

To go further afield: those whose frame of reference includes a grounding in the history of Europe during the Middle Ages, through the Reformation and down to the creation of the modern national state, are only too aware of the dangers inherent in a strong clerical establishment that is closely affiliated with the secular power, (e.g. Spain in the days of the Inquisition) as well as of the identification of the institutions of Religion with the State—England in the time of Cromwell, etc. There is no reason to suppose that we, as Jews, are immune to these dangers.

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Part II

Upon this backdrop we shall now turn to the consideration of the relevant questions for Religious Zionists today: 1) to what extent is the hegemony of the “religious establishment” a desideratum? and 2) to what extent should Religious Zionists continue to strive to use the coercive powers of the State to enforce *halakhic* observance?

More and more, seriously thinking religious people are coming to the conclusion that what may have been natural and necessary in the Socialist regime of the early days of the State, when everything in the nascent society was almost entirely dependent—financially and otherwise—on the central national institutions, may no longer be the best

strategy today in a political structure that is much closer to the western liberal democratic tradition. Indeed, the “status quo” of forty years’ standing, and what is happening in connection with it, is the epitome of what is amiss in the present relationship between Judaism and the State.

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It is almost a truism that, in the realm of the spirit, innovations are introduced by charismatic personalities. Then comes the next and vital stage of institutionalization, for only thus can the creative sparks be preserved. However, since, as has already been pointed out, everything in this world—whether people, things or institutions,—is subject to the laws of birth and decay, the ensuing stage after institutionalization must, of necessity, be either stagnation with its concomitant decay, or renewal.

One need only call to mind the history of various dynasties of Hasidic rabbis. The first two stages were the same for all—but some of them have stagnated while others have been renewed and flower today as in former times.⁵ The Zionist movement is a similar case in point, as is the Kibbutz movement and, what holds true for all these, holds true for the contemporary Religious-State *modus vivendi* in Israel today.⁶

The famous *status quo* of religion and the State is a facet of this inherent “law.” It is the institutional perpetuation of a specific moment in time, without thought to the changing realities and, therefore, it has decayed. Indeed, though the *status quo* is being frontally attacked and frantically defended as though it were an important dyke in the religious bulwarks, in actual fact, much of it is today no more than an empty shell, and one can almost say that it has ceased to exist in any meaningful sense—not because it has been disregarded, but because it is no longer relevant to the current existential situation.

There is no doubt that some legislation is required. What is being questioned is whether the present “what” and “how” are, indeed, contributing to the desired objective: the maximalizing of the Jewish character of the State of Israel.

5. cf. Maier Orian, *Madregot-B'Olamah shel Hasidut* (Masada, 1975), p. 43 ff. and 55.

6. In fact, it is well to remember, in the present context, that the Religious Zionist movement itself was, in its own day, most anti-establishment. Shmuel Hayyim Landau, the founder of the *Torah Ve-Avodah* movement, and the ideologist of the *Po'el Hamizrachi* movement, called for a “holy rebellion.” Had *da'at torah* been followed blindly there would have been precious little Religious-Zionist Aliyah and, surely, no religious Kibbutzim where young bachelors and girls worked and lived together in close proximity with hardly anything that would have been considered adequate chaperoning. (See, S. Don-Yahya, *Hamered Hakadosh*.)

The Status Quo

It is, indeed, high time that a closer look be taken at the *status-quo* to ascertain what it once had to offer and to consider to what extent it still remains of value. When the State was founded, the *status-quo* ensured a more or less traditional atmosphere to the community. This is no longer so today—and, indeed, would not be so even were its terms preserved in all of their minutiae.

Following is a sampling of some of the major areas involved. More often than not, technological or socio-economic developments have altered circumstances so radically that little which is meaningful is to be gained by the preservation of the specific “religious legislation” and nothing significant is to be lost in terms of *Yiddishkeit* by its disappearance.

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By and large, buses are still forbidden to run on *shabbat*.

When few people owned private cars, this law gave the streets of the major cities a palpable *shabbat* atmosphere, but, today, when someone in almost every family—rich or poor—owns a car, this is no longer so. I remember walking in the streets of Jerusalem on a *shabbat* afternoon some years ago after a long absence. The first reaction was: “How much more observant the people of Jerusalem used to be. In the 60s hardly any cars used to go by on *shabbat* in this neighborhood!”

But, then, I realized that what had really occurred was not so much an erosion in religious commitment, as a sharp rise in the standard of living. The same families who used to live in two rooms in the center of town, and could hardly make ends meet, now lived in spacious apartments—often in new neighborhoods far from the center of town—and they possessed all of the modern amenities, including cars. Many of these people had not driven cars on *shabbat* in former days, not only because they had no need to—since they, as well as all of their friends and relatives lived within walking distance, but for the even simpler reason that they had no car.

Thus, while formerly the absence of public transportation brought in its wake a restful atmosphere, today the net result of the buses not running on *shabbat* is that, instead of one bus we now have several cars, while even those who own no cars use the organized inexpensive taxi shuttles which also involve several cars to one bus.

Nothing is gained by the absence of public transportation as far as the *shabbat* atmosphere of the non-observant Jew is concerned. But, resentment of the religious establishment, and more, rather than less, traffic on the roads on *shabbat* are the unintended but hardly avoidable side-effects.

Is this then, not an obsolete symbol, rather than a viable existential reality?

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Likewise, the *status-quo* concerning places of entertainment which, until recently, kept movie houses closed, is another illustration of a battle over something whose relevance has become, at best, peripheral. As a statute meant to minimize the *hillul shabbat* connected with Friday night entertainment it is almost completely obsolete and positively counter-productive. The demonstrations, with all the concomitant *hillul shabbat* and *hillul haShem*, reflect the desperation of the religious establishment; but even their success would not really improve the *shabbat* atmosphere of the non-religious Israeli one *iota*.

The issue has lost all contact with reality, for movies are no longer a major form of entertainment, while discothèques, which are not part of the *status quo* and, so, proliferate undisturbed, are far more objectionable from every religious standard of measurement—whether it be *shabbat* observance, *kashrut*, modesty of behaviour, intemperate drinking, or general licence. Precious few who are kept from going to the movies are thus kept from *hillul shabbat*. The choice is no longer between the films and the *shabbat* table, but between the movie house and the discothèque. What has been gained?

Divested of its symbolic valence, the whole issue would hardly be of major interest. Relatively few people go to the movies any more, compared to the number who, on Friday night, prefer to engage in other activities which are no less forbidden by *halakhah* and no more in the spirit of *shabbat*!

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Closer to the heart of the problem are the ongoing battles in the arena of the elementary and secondary school systems. These are causing the greatest irreparable damage.

While many religious parents demand the right to open “better,” more selective religious schools for their children, rather than send them to the local *Mamlakhti-Dati* school, at the very same time they, or others of the same circles, declare a “holy-war” on the attempts of non-orthodox parents to open schools with an enriched traditional Jewish content within the framework of the non-orthodox General-State trend.

Clearly, if plurality in the field of religious education is looked upon as something positive, or, at the very least, as an inherent civil right when practiced by those who consider the neighborhood religious schools insufficiently demanding religiously, it must, in elementary fairness, also be granted to those who are at the other end of the spectrum, for whom these same schools are not suitable, for the very reason that they *do*

make uncompromising demands concerning the religious practice in the homes of the children attending these schools.

The net result of the present policy is tragically Kafkaesque. While the neighborhood religious schools are not considered religious enough in the eyes of many religious parents, the majority of Israeli Jewish children are effectively deprived of anything that smacks of serious Jewish tradition, since, on the one hand, they are discouraged from attending these very schools because their parents are not prepared to “toe the line” in their overt religious behaviour, while, at the same time, the option of Masorti schools as part of the General State Trend is stymied.

Here, too, I suspect that what was once a reasonable attempt to keep children from traditional homes from defecting to the General-State Educational trend, results now in the minimalization of the Jewish content of the education of vast numbers of Israeli children.

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The thorny question of the *exclusive* jurisdiction of the Rabbinical courts in matters of personal status.

Until recently, this has been axiomatically considered to be the most important of all the laws respecting religious matters, since it was considered to be vital for the preservation of the unity of the Jewish people. Today, however, there are some who have come to the conclusion that, even in this area, the real—and not merely the symbolic—objective will be closer to achievement if the option of civil-marriage be provided!

It is by now common knowledge in American Rabbinical circles that, according to the *pesak* of the late renowned Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, where Orthodox *huppah* and *kiddushin* are available, *those who knowingly do not avail themselves of it* are considered to have expressed their desire not to enter into it, and to have thus specifically “opted-out.”

Rabbi Halevi of Tel-Aviv has also recently declared himself to be of the view that civil marriage may, in fact, be preferable to forcing all couples to have *huppah* and *kiddushin*. He maintains that, under the circumstances just noted, in the absence of the traditional presumption, the need for a proper *get* (religious divorce) would be less absolute should either of the parties to such a union wish to have it dissolved.⁷

This would do away with the present Rabbinical monopoly in this area. On the other hand, there is a positive side to the equation; it might also provide the “*halakhic* emergency” which could just possibly succeed in overcoming the *yirat hora-ah** which has, for many genera-

7. Though it would not, of course, have any effect on those who were already married.

* The phrase means literally “the fear of rendering a decision” on a controversial issue, or the unwillingness of some rabbinic authorities to issue a ruling either because of their alleged modesty, or the fear of the censure of their colleagues, or out of concern lest the individual decisor might have been mistaken. (R.G.)

tions, caused so much suffering and heartache to women trapped in impossible situations. What is more, with the alienation of ever larger segments of the nation from traditional Judaism, it has resulted in the proliferation of *mamzerim*, spawned by the increasing number of couples for whom the *halakhic* formalities, if unattainable, are no longer indispensable.

Here, too, then, under the circumstances as they are, *not as we would like them to be*, the net result of the introduction of the option of civil marriage would probably be fewer *mamzerin*, rather than the other way around.

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One could continue this list—but the point is clear. Many of the “religious” battles being fought with such vigour today are neither over the real issues nor are they being waged with the most efficacious weapons.

Political power is something that comes and goes. It is most short-sighted to suppose that the fact that the religious parties until now almost always managed to maneuver themselves into a position of power is any indication that this situation will remain so forever, or even for much longer. If the influence of Jewish values, forms and traditions—i.e., the practical expression of *halakhah* in the character of the State—depends on political pressure and nothing else, the day is not far off when, God forbid, all signs of Judaism will disappear in Israel.

Today, the religious parties have substantial power. Tomorrow, if this power were lost, *the potential backlash might very well be so severe, at least initially, that there would be a wholesale erasure of all of the “religious” laws*. As a result, a religious Jew would no longer be able to work in many areas because of the impossibility of keeping Shabbat, nor would he be able to eat in most public institutions. In the absence of state-support, even religious schools might very well become a luxury that many families would hardly be able to afford.

The picture has purposely been painted in a sombre hue in order to prove that coercion is no solution and may well become a counter-productive boomerang. It is, in any event, certainly a grave mistake today. True, most of the laws involved have long been on the books, but, a generation ago, laws which are now experienced as coercive enjoyed the virtual consensus of large segments of society—and it is the subjective, rather than the objective, reality which is relevant in this respect.

Even then, at the inception of the State and the creation of the *status quo*, only those things were achieved concerning which there was widespread consensus. This was true even among some of the members of the Marxist Zionist factions who were perhaps even more violent than their opposite numbers are today in their attempts to eradicate

the influence of what they considered to be the “opiate of the masses.” *The difference is not at the fringes, but in the attitude and feelings of the silent majority.*

Subjectively, the feeling of coercion then was hardly very great, for most people were still committed to Jewish tradition and a Jewish life-style. It was, of course, the religious parties who initiated the “religious” laws and lobbied to have them passed. Nevertheless, a generation ago the community as a whole, except for fringe elements, felt more comfortable with these laws than they would have felt without them. They may even have found it convenient to be able to “blame” the religious parties for things which otherwise they would have missed had they not been there.

Further, the very justification for Zionism in the Western world was largely based on the Biblical tradition. It would, therefore, have been highly impolitic to exclude the forms of religion from the emerging social and political structure.

But, today, forty years later, the State of Israel is the same kind of fact as the State of Jordan. It needs no justification either in its own eyes or in the eyes of the world, beyond this simple fact of its existence, while many of those living in Israel are not here as the result of any voluntary existential choice.

The majority of Jews in Israel today were either born here or brought by their parents at a very young age. Hence, there is no reason to assume that they are necessarily more committed to their Jewish identity than are the vast majority of the Jews of the Western world who are also the children and grandchildren of committed Jews, while they themselves do not identify automatically with their Jewish heritage, know precious little of it, and have few, if any, qualms about assimilating entirely.

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In view of all this, I think it would be well to cease equating the power of religion with the political clout of the religious “establishment.” There is, we suggest, another more viable option for the achievement of the goal of keeping the State of Israel “Jewish.” This does not depend on the preservation of the *status quo* or any other *quid pro quo* of forced observance. Nor need one reasonably expect the majority of Jews in Israel to be “orthodox”—desirable as such a goal is, in our opinion, in and of itself.

Beyond the relatively few who will go the entire way from irreligion to observant Judaism, there are the vast numbers in the middle group who can be brought to love and respect Jewish tradition even if they do not find themselves personally strong enough to live completely according to its tenets.

Once one again recognizes that Judaism is not an all-or-nothing proposition, that there is much immediate value, and even more value in the long run, in bringing closer the many Jews in Israel today who are alienated. A huge stride will then have been taken.

Religious Zionists, because of their modern life style and full participation in all of the endeavours—as well as in all the joys and all the heartaches—of the community at large, are the ideal candidates for such activity.

Though many Religious Zionists may not be at one with all aspects of the *ba'alei teshuvah* movements, of the Habad outreach, and of the Gush Emunim propaganda, these are, undoubtedly, each in their own way, ample proof of the potentially irresistible attraction that Judaism intrinsically has.

The immediate goal would be the nurturing of the remaining vestiges of positive identification on the part of the average Jew in Israel with the forms and the content of Jewish tradition. This positive personal identification must be fostered and encouraged, for only if the “silent majority” does, indeed, love the Jewish tradition deeply will the State retain its vibrant traditional Jewish quality for any length of time. No statutes can do this.

This is not to suggest that all connection between religion and government be severed, but the raisons d'être for legislation are the religious services required by those who are religious, the good order of the society, and the desire of the majority of Israelis to live in a Jewish state, not only Jewish in name and Jewish in population, but also, and not less so, Jewish in spirit, in customs and in traditions.

On the one hand, this agenda has no theocratic ambitions. At the same time, it takes as the birthright of every Jew in Israel—no less than in other liberal democracies—the making available of the means to live a full Jewish life.

Though Theocracy may theoretically be the perfect form of government, this is so only when both the governed and, particularly, the human governors, themselves are perfect. Hence, until the advent of the Messiah—with the concomitant spiritual progress of humanity—such a goal can only bring harm, not only to society, but also to the furtherance of Torah-true Judaism.

Is There an “Essence of Judaism” After All?

ROBERT GOLDENBERG

THERE ARE TWO DISTINCT WAYS IN WHICH A religion may be studied. By way of shorthand I shall call these the “theological” and the historical,” and I shall begin by emphasizing ways in which they differ.

A *theological* approach to Judaism is centered on a quest for its core or normative essence. Once identified and described, this “essence of Judaism” (the phrase belongs to Leo Baeck, who also typifies the approach) will be held to persist through all periods in the history of Judaism, and will be considered especially visible in its most impressive manifestations. Persons held to exemplify Judaism will be those whose life or thought can be described as conforming to, or expressing, the proposed “essence”; all others who *seem* Judaic but depart from this model will be explained away in one fashion or another.

It should be noted that this procedure can be followed both by those whose purpose is apologetic and by those engaged in some sort of hostile polemic. It is useful even to those whose purpose it is to condemn Judaism itself; these last will simply propose for Judaism an “essence” that neutral observers would find unpleasant or even repulsive.

This manner of proceeding leads to some curious results. First, the relevance of any particular phenomenon (a person, belief, ritual, or the like) to the study of “Judaism” is always determined in advance by reference to an extrinsic criterion, namely, conformity to the author’s chosen model, and is not subject to any other validation or rejection. This immunity to confirmation or disconfirmation explains the endless, fruitless debate over whether Philo of Alexandria was “authentically” Jewish; it sheds light, as well, on the sneer of the anti-Semite that Freud represents a typically destructive Jewish influence and the traditional apologetic response that there was nothing distinctively Jewish about Freud at all. All participants in any such debate have decided in advance what is, or is not, essentially Judaic; adjudication of particular cases comes only after this has already been accomplished.

Furthermore, the implication of thus calling one group or person or phenomenon “Jewish” has often been that others are less so. Such exclusion may be central to an author’s purpose or only incidental, but

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it follows almost automatically from the notion that one describable core represents the “essence” of the tradition. Isaac Deutscher’s concept of the “non-Jewish Jew”—the idea that some who appear least Jewish (i.e., by other people’s definition) are, in fact, the most so (i.e., by Deutscher’s)—is an intentionally ironic example of this method at work.

In sum, the “theological” search for Judaism begins with its essence already in hand. This approach goes on to locate groups that have embodied that essence and tries to identify the mechanisms by which it has been preserved and transmitted. All further discussion, at least in principle, is limited to those groups and mechanisms; the rest, outside of the “mainstream,” not “normative,” are deemed unworthy of attention.

In certain respects, the *historical* approach to this same question is the mirror image of the approach just described. The historian of Judaism, unlike the theologian, will cast about for data as broadly as possible: any phenomenon related to the Judaic tradition will be useful in trying to describe it. The last phrase is crucial to this distinction: the historian’s effort is not to *define* the core, but to discover the outer limits of the variety which Judaism has displayed in the course of its development, and then to *describe* that variety in all of its richness.

It follows from this conception of the task at hand that any who, in good faith, declare themselves to be practicing Judaism must be taken at their word. The “Judaism” thus practiced may appear surprisingly odd or even deviant; indeed, other Jewish groups might deny its legitimacy altogether. The historian in such a case may wonder how such an understanding of the tradition could arise, why other Jewish groups or individuals considered it unacceptable, and how this particular community or person was able (or convinced or compelled) to adopt it. These questions, however, will not evict such forms from their place in the inquiry. From the historian’s point of view, “deviant” forms belong in a description of Judaism as much as any others. They are not to be explained away.

In general, if the theological mode of study is exclusive, the historical mode is inclusive. The theologian seeks the “essence” in order to imply that all other forms of the tradition are somehow less deserving of attention. The historian seeks the outer limits on the assumption that anything within them will be worthy of attention. The theologian reduces the number of people who “authentically” represent the tradition in its development, while the historian studies as many bearers and as many forms of the tradition as can possibly be found.

In practice, of course, the distinction between these two modes of study is never entirely sharp. The theologian (at least the informed theologian) must recognize that “deviant” interpretations of the tradition have, at times, arisen, and he will need to resort to a historical explanation to account for them. Indeed, the claim that a normative form

of the tradition has continuously existed since the beginning is, itself, a historical claim, and, in order to defend it, mainstream theologians need to construct a history for this tradition and to marshal evidence that their construction is sound.

Conversely, most historians will concede, from time to time, that a given interpretation of Judaism is aberrant. The historians may find it difficult to give such judgments a sound theoretical foundation, but they are hard to avoid entirely. Toward the end of this paper I shall try to define religious deviance in a manner consistent with the goals and procedures of the historian of religion.

* * *

As the scope of investigation grows wider and wider, the historian of Judaism will inevitably be led to wonder whether the tradition has an essence, or a core, or a "normative" mainstream at all. Such a mainstream can be, and often has been, identified by different practitioner-interpretors of Judaism (it always includes and usually culminates with themselves), but any construction of this kind can be sustained only by tendentiously omitting much of the available evidence. It should be noted as well that, over the course of history, the "mainstreams" identified by believing, observant Jews have themselves been numerous and varied.

Now, every religious community, or course, is built on some sort of foundation. Every religious community will identify something in nature or history as establishing the validity of its claims, and every religious community built on a tradition will claim, as well, that its "foundation" has had a certain permanence. Again, however, the historian eventually discovers that different communities, while all claiming to adhere to the same tradition, will not necessarily have the same foundation in mind when they make this claim. Not all will acknowledge this diversity, and some may not know of the others at all, but any observer will quickly see that this is the case.

A sacred Scripture, for example, is, and, since the time of Nehemiah, has apparently been, an essential element in the "foundation" of Judaism, but the term "Scripture" does not always point to the same reality. Ancient authorities into the time of the Amoraim, continued to debate the inclusion of certain books in the canon. The Samaritan canon, to this day, contains only six books—the Pentateuch plus Joshua—while the Bible of Greek-speaking Jews in the ancient world was substantially larger than the present Hebrew canon of the *Tanakh*. Most important of all, the distinctive contribution to Jewish thought of the ancient rabbis was the idea that Moses had received two Torahs at Sinai, of which only one was written down.¹ The whole point of this conception was to

1. See *Sifre* on Deuteronomy, section 351.

reject as a distortion of authentic Jewish religion any narrow claim that Judaism rests on the Bible.

What remains, then, is the notion that all religious forms of Jewish life have revered a Book. Everything else has varied—the grounds for the reverence, the quality and practical expression of the reverence, the Book's very contents, the place of the Book in a larger religious framework. While some sort of Scriptural foundation may well have been present at every stage in the history of Judaism, the continuity of the Judaic tradition has not required that its foundation always be the same.

Indeed, not only has a process of interpretation and reinterpretation continually reshaped this Scriptural foundation, interpretations have continually entered into the foundation and become part of it. On the level of detail, scholars report that the Bible as we now have it is full of marginal annotations that found their way into the body of the book. More grandly, an early rabbi claimed that “the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed to Moses . . . everything that [later] Scribes were destined to invent,”² while a parallel source makes the same point in other words: “Whatever a senior student is destined to recite before his master was already spoken to Moses at Sinai.”³ In this connection, the Talmud quotes Scripture: “If there is a thing of which people say, ‘This is new,’ it already existed in the aeons that preceded us.”⁴ These sayings shed new light on the ancient rabbinic adage that the Torah contains no before or after; they suggest that the eternity of the Torah lies precisely in its infinite variety.

The modern historian, then, need not be afraid that questions of the sort being raised here venture into forbidden territory. Legitimate spokesmen for the rabbinic tradition have, at various times, considered the question of interpretation and its relationship to the “foundation” of Judaism, and their answer has been quite far-reaching: not merely that later students are the equal in their generation of Moses in his, but that Moses' teaching already embraces anything later generations may think they have discovered on their own.⁵ “Foundation” and interpretation are one. The various meanings of Torah become known only after later interpreters have put them into words, but then they possess the same authority as any other interpretation ever offered. All of these interpretations together are what give content to the foundation itself; without them, it is nothing, an empty shell.

As with Scripture, so, too, with other basic components of the Judaic tradition. All religious forms of post-biblical Jewish life have been characterized by some form of monotheism, but Maimonides' conception of the Deity had little in common with that of Isaac Luria, nor has

2. Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 19b.

3. Jerusalem Talmud, *Megillah* 4:1 74d.

4. Ecclesiastes 1:10.

5. Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh Hashanah* 25b and parallels; also *Sifra, Behuquotai*, ch. 8, end.

either much to share with that of Mordecai Kaplan. At most, it could be said that all three of these Jewish thinkers have tended to use language full of references to "God," though even here careful reading would uncover huge differences in their respective ways of doing so. Reference to a concept of God is useful in the study of modern Jewish life as a criterion for distinguishing between religious and "secular" forms of Jewish identity, but it is difficult to move beyond this negative aspect and find a substantive conception of God that the Jewish tradition has consistently transmitted.

The search for common practices leads to the same result. Circumcision could be considered an unvarying element in Jewish religion found since the earliest time, but it required a civil war in the time of the Maccabees to establish it. The ritual has varied from time to time, even in its anatomical details, and, during the nineteenth century, the radical wing of Reform tried to eliminate it altogether. Similar observations are possible with respect to reverence for the seventh day, or to the dietary laws, and so on.

In this connection, it is also instructive to examine how various Jewish thinkers have, themselves, tried to express the permanent core or "essence" of the Jewish religion. Leo Baeck saw Judaism as ethical monotheism, while Moses Mendelssohn declared it a revealed law. The Sages of the Talmud used the term "Torah" instead of "Judaism," and they meant by it their own distinctive doctrine of dual revelation, a written Torah known to all, and an oral Torah transmitted only by themselves. Ancient rabbis thus used the most central word in their vocabulary more to distinguish their form of "Judaism" from contemporary alternatives than to delineate the tradition in all its breadth. Indeed, just prior to the blossoming of rabbinic religion Philo understood Judaism in a radically different way. The search for a permanent substantive core at the heart of the Jewish religious tradition thus produces no results. Even among philosophers who have claimed that such a core exists, their descriptions of it have been irreducibly diverse.

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It seems to me, in fact, that the search for permanent elements in the history of Judaism leads to forms but not to content. While there is no substantive "essence of Judaism," there is a core at the center of the history of Judaism consisting of a certain rhetoric or a set of symbols chosen for their putative history, and, even more important, the decision to use that rhetoric and those symbols rather than some others in the organization and defense of religious life. Thus, the concept of God may have varied throughout Jewish history, but the desire to use the term has persisted. Observance of the Sabbath has varied, but use of that name for the seventh day has been found everywhere. The canon,

text, and interpretation of Scripture have varied, but Jews have intended to conceive of their religion as intimately tied to a Book. These terms and symbols have provided a repertoire from which any particular community that saw itself as Jewish was able to construct a religious life for itself and to see that religious life as part of a longer history.

The key phrase in the preceding sentence was “saw itself as Jewish.” The utterly indispensable prerequisite for the survival of Judaism has been the desire of a succession of communities that this tradition continue to survive. The crucial factor determining whether any given community has been “Judaic” is that community’s own desire to see itself as part of the history of Judaism, and its own willingness to take responsibility for carrying that history forward. To put the matter programmatically, if a group of people opts to make the Judaic repertoire its own and sees itself as the heir of other groups who have made the same decision, that group becomes part of the history of Judaism, and its formulation of the tradition enters the repertoire from which other groups in turn will make their own selection later on.

Judaism is a religious *tradition* by virtue of an unbroken chain of such groups. Each has considered itself the heir of its predecessors, and “the tradition” being discussed here amounts to the sum total of the inheritance that each eventually left to its successors. “Judaism” has meant different things to different people because any given community is aware of a particular set of predecessors and ignorant of other “Jewish” groups that might equally well have served in that role. This is why no one can predict how any particular community will actually develop; this is why it is impossible to know what “Judaism” is going to be two hundred years from now. Only one thing is certain: some sort of Judaism will survive as long as a group wishing to be considered “Jewish” exists to form it.

This conception of tradition suggests the sort of “essence” that a historian can propose as the core of Jewish tradition. In principle, as I have already observed, the historian is in no position to declare some readings of a tradition right and others wrong; if any tradition is taken seriously by those who revere and see it as possession a certain meaning then their very willingness to accept that interpretation proves that the tradition *can*, indeed bear that meaning, and those who accept it belong within the history of their tradition whether others welcome them there or not. Still, I propose above that a group is considered “Judaic” when it traces its antecedents back to other groups considered such, and I would like now to suggest that the “legitimacy” of such a group can be said to depend on the number and significance of the other such groups with which it claims affinity. In this sense, the idea of a “mainstream” retains an oddly statistical sort of validity, and helps explain why a Trinitarian Judaism would now seem oddly syncretistic (compare recent reaction to the “Jews for Jesus”), while a modern-day Kabbalah built around

the ten-fold Godhead of the *Zohar* would not. The "essence" of Judaism," then, consists of the symbolic repertoire which all Jewish groups have at their disposal as they form their particular ways of belief and practice, while the skill with which any one group employs that repertoire will determine how close to, or far from, this essence historians will judge it to have been.

Jewish identity has always had a very strong ethnic element alongside its more obviously "religious" element, and this sense of nationhood, while stronger at certain times than at others, makes it relatively easy to think of Judaism in the way suggested here as a religious identity carried through time by a sense of group continuity. Nevertheless, it should be remarked that the conception offered here applies to any religious tradition at all. Beliefs can be modified as conditions change, rituals can be cultivated or allowed to disappear through neglect, but a group calling itself by a particular name, and considering itself historically continuous with earlier groups calling themselves by the same name, is the *sine qua non* of any religious tradition, and the sufficient condition of its survival.

Wanted—The Ethical in Jewish Bio-Ethics

DANIEL H. GORDIS

I. INTRODUCTION

THE DAZZLING PROGRESS OF MEDICINE, PARTICULARLY in areas of reproductive technology and means of delaying death, raises a host of economic, legal and ethical issues. Surrogate motherhood, in-vitro fertilization, new definitions of death and nutrition and the hydration of the comatose have all stretched our legal and ethical thinking to the breaking point, if not beyond. What is often overlooked is that these cases also pose tremendous challenges for *halakhah*, or Jewish law.

We will suggest below that the classic halakhic approach to such cases, a precedent-based or formalist one, proves incapable of adequately addressing such radically new issues. In its stead, Jewish law must begin to use its classic texts *not* to answer specific medical questions for which the “precedents” that these texts contain are all but fabricated, but should employ these texts in the process of leading us to a defensible, positive¹ Jewish conception of human life. Armed with that conception, we can then approach these new medical and ethical questions in a manner more sophisticated and more productive than was previously possible.

II. THE PROBLEMS WITH HALAKHIC FORMALISM

A. *Obscuring the Salient Issues*

Given the pendulum-like pattern of social standards, it is not surprising that our society has moved, in twenty-five years, from almost violent secularism to a new tide of religious ultra-conservatism. Those who struggle to maintain a viable position somewhere between the extremes must demonstrate that religious traditions can offer a sophisti-

1. The term “positive,” as it is used throughout the paper, implies not a judgment as to the merits of the conception under discussion, but to the normative implications that such conceptions may, and often do, have.

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cated but sensitive perspective which might otherwise be absent from debates on crucial social issues.

For Jews committed to the halakhic system, the ability to demonstrate the capacity of *halakhah* to speak to a wide variety of these social issues is, therefore, quite appealing. But while it is important to prove that the rich Jewish legal tradition can, in fact, address these concerns, overzealousness can inadvertently produce inauspicious results. Halakhic formalism, the process of seeking some "precedent" (no matter how remote) in order to make a positive statement about a halakhic response to a certain issue, may ultimately prove devastatingly problematic. Classical *halakhah* certainly does speak about abortion. It *might* have something to say about transplants, or, at least, when we can take a vital organ from a donor. But *halakhah* could surely not have anticipated the dilemmas posed by surrogate motherhood or organ transplants from non-humans. To pretend to find any precedent for this type of issue destroys the meaning of the original case, and, in many instances, stresses a non-essential trait which the cases share in common at the expense of never addressing the new ethical agenda at hand.

One glaring example of such a stretched attempt to locate precedent is the contention that artificial insemination by a donor (A.I.D.) should be prohibited because it constitutes adultery.² While many authorities dismiss the claim of adultery, other rather formalist considerations motivate most traditional scholars to prohibit A.I.D. absolutely:

Artificial insemination using the semen of a donor other than the husband is considered by most rabbinic opinion to be an abomination and strictly prohibited for a variety of reasons, including the possibility of incest, lack of genealogy and the problems of inheritance. Some authorities regard A.I.D. as adultery, requiring the husband to divorce his wife and her forfeiture of the *ketubbah*, and even the physician and the donor are guilty when involved in this act akin to adultery.³

In an age in which adultery is a serious societal issue, employing *it* as the precedent for A.I.D. both minimizes the moral claim against "real" adultery, and lessens the seriousness with which objective observers will view legitimate claims that *halakhah* has potential relevance in other realms. Furthermore, the likelihood of incest as a result of A.I.D. is infinitesimally small (and would be *nil* had the rabbis ruled that Jews may not be donors but *may* be recipients), while genealogy and inheritance are virtually moot considerations today. Why, then, would scholars take an issue of tremendous importance (and anguish) to the couple

2. See, for example, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Zirelsome, *Teshuvot Ma'arekhei Lev*, no. 73, and Rabbi Ovadiah Hadaya, *No'am I* (5718), pp. 130–137. For two rather typical discussions of these sources, see J. David Bleich, *Judaism and Healing: Halakhic Perspectives* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1981), pp. 80–84, and Immanuel Jakobovits, *Jewish Medical Ethics* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1959), p. 248.

3. Fred Rosner, "Artificial Insemination in Jewish Law," in Fred Rosner and J. David Bleich, eds., *Jewish Bioethics* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1979), p. 115.

in question and discuss a seemingly insignificant, though marginally related, case?

The answer lies not in the actual halakhic precedents, but with much more powerful intuitions about the moral implications of A.I.D. This becomes clear when one compares J. David Bleich's discussion of A.I.D. and adoption *on the very same page*. Regarding adoption, he states:

Fear of a possible incestuous marriage mandates that an adopted child be made aware of the facts concerning his parentage. Moreover, either the child himself or a person readily accessible to him must know the identity of his natural parents. Only in this manner will the adopted child be able to determine that a prospective marriage partner is not, in fact, a forbidden relative.

However, when it comes to A.I.D., Bleich's language becomes harsher. He claims that:

Those authorities who do not regard A.I.D. as adultery nevertheless view it as a *repugnant* [emphasis added] violation of the marital relationship which entitles the husband to divorce his wife without being obliged to satisfy the financial obligations specified in the marriage contract.⁴

While his conclusion may be defensible, Bleich's description of the issue is disingenuous. If A.I.D. is not adultery, then adoption and A.I.D. pose virtually the same halakhic dilemmas. If so, it is impossible to explain the differing tones of the two paragraphs without recourse to some other issue which lies at the heart of Bleich's discussion. We get some indication of what that issue might be in Fred Rosner's citation of a number of opinions which consider A.I.D. "an act of hideousness" or "an abomination" or "human stud farming."⁵ These authorities find something problematic in the very notion of a married woman being impregnated by another man's sperm.⁶ Issues related to Jewish notions of sexuality, parenthood, the nature of marriage and the like are all implicit here. These are, indeed, crucial issues which Jewish ethics must address. But if *these* are the issues underlying our objection to A.I.D., we should say so clearly and discuss those issues on their own merits, rather than obscuring the salient halakhic issue by reference to secondary ones.

B. Inordinate Conservatism

Another danger of the approach to text that mandates that every case must be answered by means of precedent is that the search for such a precedent will often lead to unnecessarily and unacceptably conservative results. In the consideration of the precedents available, we

4. *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

5. Rosner, *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

6. This issue will also have important bearing on the subject of surrogate motherhood. The author is in the process of writing an evaluation of Jewish attitudes in this dispute, which should appear in the near future.

need to remain cognizant of the context in which the rabbis wrote and taught. Many conservative authorities overlook the fact that older decisions rested upon the best scientific and medical knowledge then available to the decisors. Obviously, they could not take into account the far-reaching advances in twentieth-century medical science and technology which their modern successors persist in ignoring, in the name of "loyalty to tradition." As a result, the intellectual integrity of the halakhic process is undermined and the wisdom and compassion inherent in the *halakhah* gravely compromised.

For example, classic definitions of death based on circulation and respiration do not, of necessity, reject the validity of brain death as a modern criterion. To cite rabbinic sources which speak only about respiration and circulation says nothing about the rabbis' view of "brain death" as a criterion.⁷ To suggest otherwise is to ignore questions of what the rabbis did, and did not, know. Rabbinic texts mention only the criteria that they could measure; that does not, of necessity, mean that they would have rejected electroencephalograms had they known about them.

A striking example of the extremely limiting results of failing to consider what the rabbis could and could not have known is to be found in the ruling on the permissibility of heart transplants. Because they insist on maintaining cessation of circulation and/or respiration as the standards for defining death, such noted authorities as Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg have claimed that

it is definitely forbidden to remove the heart from a donor for transplantation purposes since, of necessity, this must be done while the heart continues to beat and the patient is, from a halakhic point of view, still alive . . . Such an act is considered murder.⁸

Any ethical or legal system which takes human life seriously must carefully define when that life has ended. However, to protect human life by insisting on standards developed in a period characterized by a paucity of data and, thereby, to ignore the progress of medical science, ironically robs potential heart recipients of life. That is the ultimate tragedy; in our insistence on the significance of life, we sometimes foreclose the possibility of affording someone else a second lease on his own life.

Abortion raises similar problems. Traditional halakhic sources regarding abortion address the health and welfare of the mother, not that of the infant. But before we conclude that the results of tests such as sonograms and amniocentesis cannot constitute legitimate halakhic grounds for abortion, we must note that the rabbis had absolutely no

7. "Brain death" as such is a radical oversimplification of a complex process with distinct stages. For our purposes here, however, the point can be made without a thorough discussion of the neurological stages involved.

8. Eliezer Waldenberg, *Ziv Eliezer*, Vol. X., sec. 25, par. 5.

access to information about the fetus. It is faulty logic at best (and intellectual dishonesty at worst) to suggest that rabbis were inherently uninterested in the health of the fetus.

Conservative rulings on abortion are not inadmissible. But advocates of such restrictive positions need to state what theological claims underlie their position, rather than claiming that they are “forced” into it by reading of the rabbinic texts. Claiming that possible congenital malformations do not constitute a legitimate claim for abortion might be, it seems to me, a very defensible position. But it would be so because of our fears about determining what constitutes a worthwhile human life, what we mean by human potential and when (or if) we can legitimately speak of a “right to live.” These are the issues that motivate denying consideration to results of sonograms and amniocentesis. Our discussions, however, need honestly to begin to reflect that. The texts themselves, in many cases, are not the sole or predominant issue.

Authorities who insist on traditional rabbinic standards in definitions of death or in considerations of abortion rely on *implicit* conceptions of the value of human life and personhood. These are crucial and legitimate concerns, but instead of leaving them implicit, our discussions should be based on some positive Jewish conception of what human life is. Does it require cognition? Does it require hope? Is there, in an age of soaring medical costs and increasing homelessness, a *right* to indefinite treatment which will not cure? While there clearly is a Jewish obligation to heal, what happens to that obligation when healing is no longer a reasonable possibility? Does the patient have some say in what is crucial about life to him or to her? Armed with some thoughts on these and other vital issues, we can proceed to discuss the definition of death in a sophisticated fashion. Until we do so, however, the texts at hand camouflage the real issues which lie at the hearts of our positions. Ultimately, texts become pretexts.

C. What Do the Sources Say

Such uses, or misuses, of text do not appear only in restrictive rulings. Even liberal thinkers, in the process of using aggadic material in addition to halakic material, often slip into these traps. One of the finest summaries of Jewish approaches to issues of medical ethics is that by Elliot Dorff.⁹ He makes an invaluable contribution to the literature by demonstrating that (a) seriousness about halakhic issues need not always result in restrictive positions, and that (b) in combing the rabbinic tradition for guidance, we may legitimately make use of aggadic as well as halakhic sources. But in scouring the aggadic material for “precedent” (in a much less technical sense) for these liberal conclusions, he

9. Elliot N. Dorff, “Choose Life: A Jewish Perspective on Medical Ethics,” *University Papers*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (Los Angeles: University of Judaism, 1985).

seems to force the text to address issues that it may not actually confront.

A classic example of Dorff's use of halakhic sources may be found in his discussion of the distinction between active and passive euthanasia. Arguing that the rabbis recognized the distinction between actively ending a life and passively allowing the forces attacking life to win, he mentions the famous passage in the Babylonian Talmud, describing the death of R. Haninah b. Teradyon. It relates that the Romans:

- A. brought him and wrapped a Torah scroll around him. They surrounded him with bundles of vines and lit them on fire. [Then] they brought tufts of wool and soaked them with water and placed them on his chest so that he would not die quickly.
- B. His daughter said to him, "Father, must I see you this way?" He replied, "If only I were being burned alone, the matter would be painful enough for me. Now, however, that I am burned along with the Torah, [God] who demands [compensation] for the humiliation of the Torah will also demand [compensation] for my humiliation."
- C. His students said to him. "Rabbi, what do you see?" He said to them, "A blank parchment burning, and letters floating [up to heaven]."
- D. They continued, "So, too, open your mouth and let the fire enter you."
- E: [He said], "It is better to let the One who gave life take it, and let one not injure himself."
- F. The executioner said to him, "Rabbi, if I increase the flame and remove the woolen tufts from your chest, will you see to it that I acquire the world to come?" He said, "Yes," He said, "Swear," so he swore.
- G: Immediately, he increased the flame and removed the woolen tufts, and [R. Haninah] died. He, too, jumped into the fire.
- H: The voice of God was heard to say, "R. Haninah b. Teradyon and the executioner have been admitted to the world to come."
- I: Rabbi cried and said, "There are those who acquire everlasting life in a moment, and those who acquire it over years."¹⁰

In summarizing this narrative, Dorff tells the story as it appears in the text, but makes no mention of pericopae B or C. Indeed, if the text means to distinguish between actively causing death and passively giving in to impending death, B and C are irrelevant. thus, Dorff summarizes the passage by claiming that ". . . Rabbi Haninah permitted the removal of an agency which he knew to be beneficial in maintaining his life even after it had already been applied, and notice too that his decision is not just one opinion but that it rather has the approval of God Himself."¹¹

Such an account of the text, while compelling because of its conclusions, strikes me as problematic. At the very least, it leaves a number of questions unresolved. The most obvious objection to reading this narrative as a rabbinic endorsement of distinguishing between active and passive euthanasia is the reported behavior of R. Haninah himself.

10. B. T. *Avodah Zarah* 18a, my trans.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

After all, it is so clear that his merely opening his mouth constitutes something along the lines of active euthanasia, while the contract with the executioner is passive?!

In addition, such an explanation of the passage fails to account for several crucial theological issues. For example, if the executioner considered Rabbi Haninah a man with the power to guarantee his entrance into the world to come, how is it that he willingly participated in the execution of such a man? Furthermore, what is the significance of pericopae B and C? Typically, such rabbinic texts are constructed with great care. The appearance of the daughter and her comment is almost assuredly not gratuitous. Rashi suggests that the daughter's comment must be understood to ask, "Is this the reward for your righteous life?" If Rashi is right, another crucial theme has entered the discussion.

When one considers, as well, that the context of the narrative is a series of discussions of issues related to the world to come, it seems probable that the narrative sees *that* issue as its focus. This, of course, would explain pericope "B," something that the biomedical interpretation of the text cannot claim. Ultimately, any similarity between the story about Haninah b. Teradyon and our discussion of euthanasia is probably purely accidental. Of course, such narratives remain open to countless interpretations. Therein lies their fascination. Nonetheless, the bio-medical interpretation of the account seems particularly forced.

Before advancing, however, we must ask ourselves why it is that both classical legal and ethical texts such as *Sefer Ha-Hasidim* as well as modern liberal scholars propose this interpretation of the passage. In a tradition so predicted on the painstaking analysis of text, how have generations of scholars failed to recognize the shortcomings of viewing the Rabbi Haninah tradition as dealing with euthanasia? The motivations seem to stem from a desire to locate a source for the distinction between active and passive euthanasia and, thereby, to permit less aggressive treatment in the case of terminally ill patients. I happen to agree with this perspective. However, I believe that a more fruitful discussion will result if we justify our halakhic and ethical rulings on the basis of the fundamental beliefs motivating us, and not upon the use of texts beyond the parameters of their contexts.

III. A CONCEPTION OF HUMANNESS AS A FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL ETHICS

Can *halakhah*, then, play any role at all in our discussion? If there are no classic halakhic texts which either conceived of, or addressed the question of, nutrition and hydration of the comatose patient or the manifold issues pertaining to surrogacy, how can *halakhah* be said to offer a vital contribution to the debate?

The answer to this important question lies in the breadth of issues

addressed in the halakhic corpus. Halakhic texts often contain non-legal material; issues of economics, sociology and theology abound, and they present us with valuable material for ethical discourse.

For example, Ephraim Urbach has attempted a systematic discussion of rabbinic thought as seen through the prism of the Babylonian Talmud, a largely legal masterpiece.¹² Similarly, geonic and post-geonic responsa literature is replete with theological assumptions and claims.¹³ and scholars have also located sociological and economic factors in modern responsa literature.¹⁴ Because halakhic literature can often reveal implicit views on issues relevant to the fundamental question of what it means to be human, this literature can assist us in arriving at those very fundamental assumptions to which we alluded above.

Because this assertion may seem rather striking, it is helpful to draw an analogy with the liberal political tradition, where conceptions of human personhood, either implicit or explicit, played crucial roles in the development of normative political and philosophical positions.¹⁵ Once we recognize this phenomenon in the liberal political tradition, it will seem more natural that we incorporate it into the halakhic process as well.

Countless halakhic texts discuss Judaism's overriding concern with maintaining human life. The normative implications that such a position *might* have become evident when we compare the Jewish tradition to the positions of Thomas Hobbes.

Hobbes felt that no single duty could override a man's right to stay alive. While this might seem rather natural, two facts should be noted. First, this supposition led to some rather strange normative conclusions, and second, Judaism does not share this view. In the fourteenth chapter of *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes:

Whenever a man transfers his right or renounces it, it is either in consideration of some right reciprocally transferred to himself or for some other good he hopes for thereby . . . of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some *good to himself* [emphasis original]. And therefore there be some rights which no man can be understood by any words or other signs to have abandoned or transferred. As, first, a man cannot lay down

12. Ephraim Urbach, *Hazal—Emunot ve-De'ot* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1976). Although modern scholars like Jacob Neusner have legitimately questioned Urbach's methodology and, therefore, many of his conclusions, none of this later work raises any doubt that the legal material of the Talmud is replete with non-legal religious and theological material of all sorts.

13. A number of works have demonstrated this rather conclusively. Cf., e.g., Louis Jacobs, *Theology in the Responsa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

14. Cf., e.g., David Ellenson, "Jewish Legal Interpretation: Literary, Scriptural, Social and Ethical Perspectives," *Semeia 34: Biblical Hermeneutics in Jewish Moral Discourse*, (1985): 93–114.

15. My thanks to Professor Ronald Garet of the University of Southern California Law School for introducing me to many of the sources cited in this section.

the right to resisting them that assault him by force to take away his life, because he cannot be understood to aim thereby at any good to himself.¹⁶

Therefore, when it comes to determining whether we can legitimately speak of a duty to die for the state, Hobbes responds with an unequivocal “no.” He continues:

A covenant not to defend myself from force by force is always void. For, as I have showed before, no man can transfer or lay down his right to save himself from death, wounds, and imprisonment . . . For though a man may covenant thus: *unless I do so or so, kill me*, he cannot covenant thus: *unless I do so or so, I will not resist you when you come to kill me* [emphasis original]. For man by nature chooses the lesser evil, which is danger of death in resisting, rather than the greater, which is certain and present death is not resisting. And this is granted to be true by all men, in that they lead criminals to execution and prison with armed men, notwithstanding that such criminals have consented to the law by which they are condemned.¹⁷

Michael Walzer describes the implications of these statements succinctly:

The foundations of the theory can be briefly described. For Hobbes, the end of the state is individual life. That is both its primary purpose as an institution and the primary aim of each and every man who participates in its foundation and preservation. The brief moment of political creativity and the subsequent eternity of obedience both have a purely instrumental significance: the goal toward which both are directed is survival, or rather, security, which is survival along with freedom from the terrible fear of violent death. A man who dies for the state defeats his only purpose in forming the state: death is the contradiction of politics. A man who risks his life for the state accepts the insecurity which it was the only end of his political obedience to avoid: war is the failure of politics. Hence there can be no political obligation either to die or to fight. Obligation disappears in the presence of death or of the fear of death.¹⁸

Ironically, Hobbes has created a scheme where the state has the right to send its soldiers to war, but its soldiers have no corresponding duty to fight.¹⁹ This is an example of a conception of humanity yielding normative implications.

The second point to be made about Hobbes’ positive description of the human being is that the Jewish tradition rejects it absolutely. No reasonable use of halakhic literature could defend a right to life against all other duties or obligations. The classic rabbinic limitation of the ob-

16. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Parts I and II* (Indianapolis: the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), p. 112.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 117

18. Michael Walzer, *Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War and Citizenship* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 82.

19. For a discussion of the relationship of the concepts of “right” and “duty,” see Joseph Singer, “The Legal Rights Debate in Analytical Jurisprudence from Bentham to Hohfeld,” in *Wisconsin L. Rev.* (1982), esp. pp. 986–993.

ligation to preserve life commands *yehareg ve-al ya'avur*,²⁰ claiming that "regarding all sins, one may transgress in order to escape death, except idolatry, incest and murder." No individual has an inalienable right to life. This rather surprising view holds true even when other human beings are not physically endangered. Surely, we could understand why murder might not be countenanced. However, *halakhah* prohibits saving one's life even if no one else is physically harmed, as in cases of incest or idolatry. It therefore surely seems that life, *per se*, is not the overriding criterion for *halakhah* that it is for Hobbes. Just as this issue had normative implications for Hobbes, it probably should be *halakhah* as well.

A recent important study by Margaret Radin of the relationship between views of personhood and the resulting implications for theories of property²¹ illustrates, once again, how philosophical/theological conceptions of what a human being is, in some quintessential sense, can have normative implications. Radin suggests that we can find in the classical liberal political literature at least four conceptions of what a person is. The first, which she finds reflected most notably in Kant, is that of the person as a rights-holder, a view which sees the person mostly in terms of "universal abstract rationality." Such a view, Radin astutely notes, "excludes the tastes, talents and individual histories that differentiate one from another."²² She further suggests that such a view is found in John Rawls' now classic *A Theory of Justice*, probably the most important work on distributive justice of this century.

A second way of viewing the person, according to Radin, sees the critical characteristics of the human being not as rationality, but, rather, as a "thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places." Another view sees the person as "disembodied minds or immaterial essences," while others suggest that what counts is an "ability to project a continuing life plan" or a "consistent character structure." Radin then suggests that these differing conceptions of humanness will have normative implications for theories of property.

To return to our discussion of medical ethics, however, it behooves us to note that any one of these conceptions would have dramatic consequences for the fates of fetuses with severe retardation or other debilitating illnesses as well as for comatose patients. For, in what sense do either severely retarded fetuses or comatose patients evidence abstract rationality, reason and reflection or consistent character structures? To be even moderately intellectually honest, we must admit that subscribing to any of these positions would probably radically alter the

20. B. T. *Sanhedrin* 74a.

21. Margaret Jane Radin, "Property and Personhood," in *Stanford L. Rev.*, Vol. 34 (1982): 962ff.

22. *Ibid.*

prevailing Jewish approach to treating the comatose patient.²³ Would we, then, alter that traditional approach? Or, more likely, will we scour the halakhic literature for the assumptions about humanity and personhood which have led to those traditional formulations?

It is the latter approach which seems to me the only one which can both maintain the relevance of *halakhah* in modern issues of medical ethics and claim to reflect the intellectual honesty which most modern Jews demand. If the Jewish community hopes to be able to articulate sophisticated analyses of these issues, the immediate challenge is to begin a philosophical/theological conversation which can lead to a Jewish conception of personhood or some other fundamental principle which can then be applied in a normative manner.

Although this conversation will be along one, demanding an exhaustive analysis of countless texts and realms of *halakhah*, some conclusions do seem rather likely. First, while many of the modern philosophic approaches to these issues revolve around some conception of rights, such a perspective will probably not be validated by halakhic sources. The notion of human rights is, at best, an elusive one in halakhic literature.²⁴ The halakhic attitude towards abortion is difficult to explain from the perspective of the "rights" of the fetus.²⁵ Nor will it be easy to speak in any meaningful sense of *halakhah's* commitment to the comatose person in terms of rights. We have already suggested that a radical Hobbesian notion of right to life does not reflect a halakhic attitude. The more texts we examine, the less rights, as such, will appear central to the tradition's underlying ethical presuppositions.²⁶

Another avenue which appears unlikely to be fruitful is that of some utilitarian analysis. Because any utilitarian calculus is tied, by definition,

23. For an interesting analysis of the rights of unborn generations and comatose patients within the framework of a very specific analytical methodology, see Joel Feinberg, "The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations," in Richard A. Wasserstrom, ed., *Today's Moral Problems* (2nd ed.), esp. pp. 594–595. Feinberg bases the possibility of rights-holding on having "interests." Given that, he is forced to write:

What if . . . we think of the catatonic schizophrenic and the vegetating patient with irreversible brain damage as absolutely incurable? Can we think of them at the same time as possessed of interest and rights too, or is this combination of traits a conceptual impossibility? Shocking as it may at first seem, I am driven unavoidably to the latter view. If redwood trees and rosebushes cannot have rights, neither can incorrigible human vegetables.

24. Cf., e.g., David Daube, "The Rabbis and Philo on Human Rights," in David Sidorsky, ed., *Essays on Human Rights: Contemporary Issues and Jewish Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), pp. 234–245.

25. In addition to the sources cited above, see Bryan G. Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Non-Human Rights," in *Environmental Ethics* (Spring, 1982), esp. pp. 24–25 for an interesting discussion of the fruitfulness, or lack thereof, of establishing a far reaching ethic on the basis of a conception of rights.

26. Many scholars have noted that, while American law is essentially a system of rights, Jewish law is primarily concerned with obligations. The ethical implications of this distinction will have to be explored more rigorously as this "conversation" takes place.

to fickle and temporary human preferences, no ethic which posits an ultimate value in the human being is likely to emerge from such an analysis. And, yet, it is precisely that sense of ultimate value of the human person which seems to pervade the halakhic literature. Whence does it stem? To what might we attribute it? If it is some characteristic of the vast majority of human beings, what will happen to those human beings who do not possess it?

In all probability, we will have to discount Joel Feinberg's contention (see note 23 above) that it is not meaningful to speak of a species having rights, and claim that human beings, simply by definition of their membership in that species, merit a certain type of treatment. The substitution of "merit" for "right" here is conscious. What we find may not be rights in anything like the philosophic sense of right, but, in the theological realm, it might still be a method of attributing value completely beyond the utilitarian calculus and uniquely limited to human beings. That is probably what is meant by the biblical and rabbinic notions that human persons are created in God's image.

IV. GOD'S IMAGE AS AN ANALYTIC MODEL

The Jewish bioethics conversation has to turn now to the texts which attempt to elucidate this necessarily obscure notion. What, exactly, do we mean by the statement that we are created in God's image? Does this imply certain characteristics which we are expected to exhibit? What if we do not? Alternatively, might the concept mean a certain approach to life with no reference to an individual's potential? But, if so, do the feelings of this individual matter? If the prevailing Jewish proclivity towards aggressive treatment, for example, stems from our belief that this reflection of the divine must be preserved as long as possible, what if that very image of the divine does not want to be preserved?²⁷ As a possible alternative, though certainly not contradictory model, Rabbi Irving Greenberg has proposed the model of a "conventional ethic," in which both God and thoughtful human beings are accorded active roles.²⁸

The more we explore these matters, using these suggested analytic models, the more will we find that we cannot separate bio-medical ethics from other ethical issues. We will discover that the financial costs of keeping alive the comatose patient are shocking, and all the more disconcerting when thousands of people sleep without shelter. Should these homeless people, these other images of the divine within our midst, be part of whatever judgment or calculation we will make when we dis-

27. Most authorities presently agree that, within the Jewish tradition, there is essentially no right to refuse treatment. Would this approach have to change if we take the individual's desire seriously?

28. Irving Greenberg, "Toward a Covenantal Ethic of Medicine," in Rabbi Levi Meier, ed., *Jewish Values in Bioethics* (New York: Human Sciences Press, Inc., 1986), pp. 124-149.

cover how much it costs to keep patients alive and, often at least, how little it costs to provide basic shelter?

These same complications will arise when we discuss surrogate motherhood. Does the tremendous expense, both in payment to the surrogate and in legal fees, essentially constitute “buying” the child? Will it therefore conflict with our notion that the child is also a life created in the image of God? Does paying for the child somehow counteract the halakhic ideal that no price tag can be attached to human beings?²⁹ What about the “rights” of the parents to have a child? Do such rights exist? Does it make sense to speak of the right to create an image of the divine? If not, what is the problem? Are there no rights to have children, or is our analytical model not the appropriate one?

These questions are complex and, perhaps, unanswerable. But the advantage of exploring them, even if that means repeatedly discarding our proposed analytical model, is that the process will focus the halakhic bioethical conversation. Regardless of the specific issue at hand, all of our work in this arena presupposes such a fundamental ethic. Analyzing the legitimacy of that ethic, both halakhically (do halakhic sources truly reflect this ethic?) and philosophically (is this ethic philosophically sophisticated and viable?), will at least tell us if our conversation is proceeding in a defensible direction, or, alternatively, whether the combination of sophistication and honesty requires yet another rethinking of the use of text in this increasingly crucial halakhic conversation.

29. It will become necessary, at some point, to deal with the material in the eighth chapter of B. T. *Bava Kamma*, in which prices *are* ascribed to human beings in order to assess compensation for physical injury. How do we incorporate these texts into our emerging Jewish conception of human personhood?

Israeli Identity in Crisis

ARYE CARMON

A. A Generation Dissociated from its Past

ONE GENERATION AFTER THE HOLOCAUST AND the disappearance of the historical centers of Oriental Judaism; one generation after the establishment of the State of Israel, the practice of Jewish self-determination¹ in Israel is evincing its problematic nature. In the following pages it will be argued that at the root of the current crisis in Israeli Jewish self-determination lies a troubled relationship toward Jewish history. The underlying thesis is that, in the 1980s, the majority of native-born Israelis lack both a sense for their roots in the past and, consequently, also an orientation towards the future.

The native-born Israeli's relationship to the past, and, hence, the collective traits of his identity,² have been conditioned by two major factors. The first is generally termed the negation of the Diaspora: an ideologically rooted denial of a connection with the yesterdays which, woven together, form the span of Jewish time—a denial which was intentionally fostered by the country's founding fathers. The second is the fact of the Holocaust, in which the concrete expression of this connection in Europe was physically destroyed. Under entirely different circumstances, and for different reasons, a similar disconnection from Oriental Jewish traditions has also become a fact of Israeli life. In both cases, the dissociation from the past has been effected on the physical level as well as on the level of consciousness.

Without yesterdays there can be no tomorrows. In Israel, the difficulties in developing an orientation toward the future, inherent in the

1. "Self determination" is defined as the continuous effort to shape both the individual and collective traits of identity. These traits are shaped over time. Self determination could be described, then, as a dynamic process.

2. The relevant literature is filled with definitions of "identity." Here we rely on S. Herman's and Uriel Tal's distinctions: Identity as containing qualities which stem from "another thing." In the case of "Jewish identity," if I do not have that "other thing" (heritage), my identity is deficient. "My identity is comprised not only of a thing inherent in me . . . but also it is my self determination vis à vis the other thing, in this case, the heritage. And when we relate to Jewish identity—it is my identity vis à vis tradition." (Uriel Tal, "For the Clarification of the Concept 'Jewish Identity,'" in *Myth and Reason in Contemporary Judaism*, [Sifriat Poalim and Tel Aviv University, 1987, in Hebrew] p. 129. See Simon Herman, *The Study of Jewish Identity: Issues and Approaches, A Symposium* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1971).

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absence of a sense for the past, have been compounded by the exceptional circumstance of a continuous threat to the country's physical existence over an extended period of time. An orientation toward the future normally draws its vitality from an attitude of optimism, hope and self-confidence.³ During the past decades, however, the motifs of potential destruction, death and bereavement, compounded by signs of an impending, illusory martyrdom, have become ingrained in the collective Israeli consciousness. This, combined with the trauma of the Holocaust, has created a mental climate entirely different from that which prevailed among Jews in Palestine before the creation of the State. The idea of achieving an "exemplary society," which characterized the pre-State generation, has been replaced by an ethos of "survival." The principal consequence of this preoccupation with "survival" has been a tendency to concentrate exclusively on the "here and now" and a concomitant lack of a sense of perspective toward the future.

It thus comes about that the average Israeli—particularly in the case of those who are native-born and not actively religious—lives in a present in which his participation in collective self-determination is mainly of a negative character. He knows what he is against: zealotry, fundamentalism, religious coercion and leftists; the occupation and the "enemy's" attempt to destroy him; the *Galut* (exile) mentality. On the other hand, he finds it extremely difficult to define what he is "for." Moreover, because the collective memory for the nation's past is so deficient, he has very limited resources to draw upon in forming his opinion. In addition to both the physical detachment from the past and the ideological denial of that past, there is also the problem of the past itself, which, for the past 2000 years, was characterized by a lack of autonomy and political sovereignty. The difficulties inherent in this aspect of the past can be seen in the current widespread obliviousness to the fact that the majority of the Jewish people do not live in Zion and are not seriously considering a change in this situation.

A Jewish tradition in which autonomous relations in the exchange between society, citizen and ruler—as expressed in the social order of public-potential life—was not included in the Jewish history which the newly established State of Israel inherited on the 5th of Iyar, 5708 (May 14, 1948).⁴ Those Israelis were thus faced with a lack of substantive resources not only for defining "what" they were for, but, also, for finding a "mode" of arriving at such a definition.

3. S. N. Eisenstadt discusses the concept "orientation toward the future" as part of the Israeli *raison d'être*, in both *Israeli Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), and *The Transformation of Israeli Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985).

4. For detailed discussions about the transition from a community to sovereignty, see S. N. Eisenstadt, *Change and Continuity in Israeli Society* (New York: Humanities Press, 1974), and Dan Horowitz, Moshe Lissak, *The Origins of Israeli Polity* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1977, Hebrew).

A central foundation of the social reality for Jews in the Diaspora was voluntarism. Although the way of life was basically religious, each individual had free and immediate access to the paths of redemption and, thus, also the means for achieving it. Voluntarism and direct access to ritual encouraged pluralistic ideological expression. This pluralism was an outstanding ingredient of the collective identity. At the same time, within the circumstances of the *Galut*, the high degree of pluralism contributed to the absence of a tradition of civic responsibility. In other words, one of the elemental pillars of political culture, particularly of democratic culture, was not bequeathed to the Jewish State.⁵

In the pre-State era, ideological pluralism on the issues of the social, cultural and political nature of Zionism was held to be legitimate. The fundamental ideological contradictions⁶ which this legitimized pluralism at times revealed, fostered creativity in both practical and theoretical political thought aimed at the establishment of a future Israeli identity. This reality, which allowed both cohesiveness and creative ideological differences to flourish simultaneously, was one in which voluntarism was a dominant factor and in which sovereignty was both a practical goal and a vision for the future. The problem of maintaining and guarding the ground-rules of a chosen political culture, as demanded by political sovereignty, was an eventuality to be dealt with at some time in the future, not an issue of daily struggle. The establishment of a structured means for bearing political responsibility and the building of a tradition of political autonomy could come about only through the concrete experience of political independence.

It is our contention that a nation's ability to exercise self-determination, that is, the ability to maintain its political independence, is severely impaired if it is not reinforced by a sense of collective identity. A collective identity has an inevitable effect on individual self-confidence and, as a result, also on the stability of a given political culture. One central aspect in the development of a collective national identity is the process of reflecting on the past without denying it. The absence of a sense of identification with the past and of an attachment to tradition creates a situation in which the resources for fashioning effective social, cultural and political ideas, are lacking. In Israel, this detachment from the past and an essentially stereotyped attitude towards it, have neutralized the native Israeli's social imagination and creativity.⁷

5. Eisenstadt, *Op. cit.*

6. For a recent analysis of the variegated interpretations of the Zionist goals see Y. Har-kabi, *Fateful Decisions* (Tel Aviv: Am. Oved, 1986, Hebrew).

7. "Zionism, as a return to Zion, created a new Galut, not an exile from the land but an exile from self-identity. Zionism from its outset, did not assess that it was possible to be alienated from Judaism also in Hebrew . . . that it is possible to assimilate also in Hebrew, not only in English or German. The revolution of our parents was perhaps one of the greatest and deepest revolutions in the history of revolutions . . . We were born on the knees of negation, destruction and forgetting. We were born without a past, and hence

In the following pages, a number of issues connected with the crisis of identity in Israel of the 1980s will be treated, in particular as they relate to the political culture of the state. The first question, which underlies the entire discussion, is the role which the past necessarily plays in determining collective identity. The second is: To what extent does the heterogeneity of Israeli society endanger the unity of the social framework? And the third is: Is there a role for non-Israeli Jews in helping to overcome the crisis in Israeli identity?

B. Self-determination and the Role of the Past-Present-Future Continuum

Historically, the tendency of the "self" to seek affiliation with others found fulfilment within such social frameworks as the family and the tribe.⁸ In the modern era, these have been augmented by the nation and the state. The cement which binds a nation, which creates in its citizens a feeling of belonging, an affinity, which transforms the "self" into a part of the collective identity, is a common focus of loyalty and a sense of identification with a system of shared values. Common origins, memory, language, customs and traditions, all help to determine the extent of the group's homogeneity, while this homogeneity, at the same time, highlights the differences among the various constituent groupings. The search for a focus of loyalty and identification with a system of shared values⁹—which is actually nothing other than an attempt to provide the questions of physical existence with an ultimate meaning and purpose—is central to the history of the Jewish people. The constancy of the search is responsible for the high diversity and creativity which have lent Jewish history its vitality, and played a decisive role in shaping both collective and individual Jewish identity.

On a past-present-future continuum, the elements of Jewish tra-

our confusion about the future . . . And with the lack of tradition, we face the sorrow and bereavement empty from expression." (Uriel Tal, *Op. cit.*).

8. "The self that seeks liberty of action, determination of its own life, can be large or small, regional or linguistic; today, it is liable to be collective and national or ethnic-religious rather than individual; it is always resistant to dilution, assimilation, depersonalization." (Isaiah Berlin, "The Bent Twig, A Note on Nationalism," in *Foreign Affairs* [1972]: 38).

9. Our description of the relationship between the individual and his nation relies on the extensive analysis and wide definitions of nationalism in Yehoshua Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology* (Harvard University Press, 1964). Following are two relevant examples: "Nationalism aims at the creation and maintenance of a community of life and destiny with a will and purpose expressed in the state and a unity embodied in a nation; such unity is conscious and is maintained by a system of symbols, values and notions which define and strengthen the awareness of a collective identity." "Any definition of nationalism has to include the four elements of state citizenship (or another form of belonging), community of identification, and a feeling of collective distinctiveness. National consciousness is, then, the awareness of belonging to a political society through a community of identification, and the nature of these identifications determines the character of consciousness."

dition constituted the anvil upon which the cultural Zionist renaissance was forged. The founders of Zionism had strong roots in the past and, although they rebelled against Jewish traditions, those traditions were ultimately an indivisible part of their collective identity. The early Zionists derived their vision for the future from their roots in the past, from those elements of Jewish history which lent themselves to a renewed vision of Jewish self-determination.

The evolution of the "Zionist" life-style in Israel reveals a shocking contrast between the spiritual and cultural richness of the early decades of the 20th century and the poverty and shallowness by which it is characterized as the century draws to a close. It is a contrast between the creative impulse which arises out of the attempt to come to terms with the contents of traditions and the stagnation which comes about in the absence of traditional contents—or, in the present case, not a complete absence, but, rather, a highly troubled relationship to the past, in which the immediate past is considered in an exclusively negative light, while the distant, biblical past is glorified.

The tendency toward a visionary embracing of a glorious and distant past is common among nations which, at some point in their history, experience a break with their recent past. This is particularly the case when the break is intentional and originates from a feeling of dissatisfaction with a past which is perceived as unattractive. German and Italian literature of the late 19th century and of the respective fascist periods is filled with examples of this phenomenon.¹⁰ The disruption of contact with tradition or to an even greater extent, the denial of that tradition, represents a break in the historical continuum and a loss of the "anvil" on which a culture undergoes constant "reforging." The national identity, in an historical vacuum, becomes a conglomeration of superficially maintained customs, opportunistic behavior patterns and a highly materialistic life-style. In this sense, we would argue that the emphasis on territorial expansion—even when that territory is heavily populated by non-Jews—as evidenced by right-wing Zionists since 1967, is a glorification of the material at the expense of what might be termed universalistic-humanistic values.¹¹ An attachment to the land is a tangible substitute for the lost attachment to the past.

The missing connection with the past accounts equally for the current tendency among native Israelis to emphasize their "Israeliness" while

10. Oswald Spengler, H. S. Chamberlain and Felix Dahn are some representatives of the German Volkish circle. Pierre Gaxotte and Y. Bainorille represent French royalists, and C. Maurras and M. Barrès represent the extreme right (Action Français).

11. "The essence of nationalism is not in the return of man and nation to their primordial sources, but rather in the construction of society that maintains the sovereignty of reason over emotions, and of analytical logic over the absolute adherence to tradition." (Uriel Tal, "Jewish and Universal Social Ethics in the Life and Thought of Albert Einstein," in G. Holton and Y. Elkana, eds, *Albert Einstein, Historical and Cultural Perspectives* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979]).

remaining indifferent to the Judaic roots of this identification. In addition to interrupting the process of cultural renewal, the break with Jewish history also aborts the struggle for a Jewish identity whose traits are not primarily religious. Rather than struggle with the doubts and conflicts inherent in Jewish tradition and thus allowing them to function as stimuli for a cultural renewal, the tradition is discarded in favor of more simple solutions, as embodied in the memory of the glorious kingdoms in the distant biblical past which are seen largely in territorial, rather than spiritual terms. At the same time, the idea of a strong man, the beloved of God or of destiny, becomes increasingly attractive. In this way, the collective "self" is conveniently released from the responsibility of participating in the arduous task of self-determination.¹²

The effects of the native Israeli's dissociation from Jewish history are thus twofold: By undermining the sense of "self" it deprives Israel of a necessary precondition for the development of a western humanistic democracy; at the same time, it facilitates the development of an alternative, ethnocentric ideology, sanctified by the religion. As both the "exclusive" interpretation of Judaism and the political future of the Israeli state are integrally linked to the territorial issue, the proponents of that interpretation effectively negate democracy as a mechanism for deciding crucial issues of existence.

The extent to which common denominators can be found in the various groupings which comprise a nation determines the homogeneity of the national group. The strength of a common identification provides the self-confidence needed for a perception of "otherness" within the framework of a national group as a legitimate and essential requirement for the exercise of self-determination in a modern developed national society. There are two main levels on which the issue of "otherness" within Jewish society in Israel is at the center of as yet unresolved conflicts: the ethnic level (in the conflict between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews) and the cultural level (in the conflict between religious and secular Jews).

The intensity of these conflicts, taken both together and separately, reflects the extent of both social and cultural heterogeneity in Israel. It is reasonable to assume that a direct link exists between the ability of a society to function as a communal entity and the extent of the heterogeneity by which that society is characterized. Within defined and "reasonable" bounds, such diversity can be a source of creative energy

12. "Our hypothesis views the political and social sterility of present-day Germany as being brought about by the denial of the past. Defense against collective responsibility and guilt . . . has left traces in the German character. When psychic defense mechanisms such as denial and repression play an excessive role in the solutions of conflicts, whether in the individual or the collective level, perception of reality invariably narrows and stereotyped prejudices spread." (Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn* [New York: Grove Press Inc.], pp. 13–14.)

for the communal entity. The question in Israel today is whether the society's heterogeneity has already reached its limits. It is precisely at this point, where the continued exercise of self-determination and the collective identity itself are at stake, that the role of a common past becomes decisive. A perception among the heterogeneous groups that they share a common heritage could provide the necessary framework for containing the social, political and cultural conflicts within "reasonable limits."

In a pluralistic society which lacks a set of shared cultural values derived from a common past, the danger arises that the various groupings within that society will develop stereotyped views of each other. This is particularly the case when the groups find themselves in ideological conflict on fundamental issues. Over a period of time, the tendency toward stereotyping increases and the issue of tolerance takes on crucial importance.¹³ The inability to accept others as being different is symptomatic of a preference for the particular over the universal. On a national level, this implies a view of national interests as supreme and, therefore, of overriding importance in all matters of policy.

This view of Israel's national interests has been voiced quite often in recent years, particularly in debates generated by the decision of the Ministry of Education to foster education toward democracy.¹⁴ However, the stress on democracy as a "national interest," may, from a conceptual point of view, serve to undermine the attempt to reconcile nationalism with democracy. Rejection of the universal leaves open the possibility of rejecting such values as justice, freedom and happiness, if these are interpreted as not being in "our" interest. If an individual is unable to accept the possibility of varying interpretations, is unable to live with universal concepts and values unless they match his own "particular" interest, then he will also be unable to accept those of his compatriots who interpret patriotism in a way different from his.

Similarly, an over-emphasis on the universal, a predetermination that, in conflicts between universal and particularistic-national values (such as those associated with Jewish unity), the universal is always to be preferred—that, too, represents a form of fanaticism. It is merely the opposite extreme on the same self-determination continuum.

13. Tolerance in this study is defined as follows: "Non-interference with beliefs, attitudes, or practices different from one's own or which one deprecates; or the attitude of such noninterference. Tolerance is more active than indifference or even open-mindedness; it implies explicit inhibition of preventative efforts." (Horace B. and Ava C. English, *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms*. [London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1958]).

14. For example: "Our democratic regime is subordinate to the Zionist ideal . . . The democratic regime is sacred and obligatory as long as it is not exploited against the essence of the state's existential [foundation]: the implementation of Zionism . . ." (Israel Eldad, "Education toward Zionist Democracy," *Ha'Aretz* (March 21, 1985).

A diversified world-view allows for differences between nations and social groups and seeks to discern what is common to the members of the individual reference groups. An extreme universalistic approach, on the other hand, ignores such differences, emphasizes what is common to all peoples, and relies on the validity of fixed, "absolute" laws and rules.¹⁵ The universalist approach is static in a diverse and continually changing world. It opposes not only particularistic nationalism, but also modern nationalism not colored by Messianic elements. Nationalism of this kind emphasizes the ongoing process of change and the need for adaptability; it is defined by its variability and diversity and is able to maintain itself by a reliance on those elements which are permanent. In contrast to the universalistic approach, modern nationalism takes into account an individual past, from which it constantly derives its objectives for the future.

By ignoring the past-present-future continuum, extremist universalism creates a climate of intolerance similar to that brought about by its counterpart at the other extreme. The perception of nationalism as a distortion of "sane reality," for example, by those professing a universalistic approach, reveals an intolerance no less severe than that of the particularists. In Israel, self-proclaimed "sane Zionists," who wave the flag of universalistic humanism, tend strongly toward generalizations, often slandering as "insane" any and all who oppose their views. The result is a selective process by which, for example, the struggle for the rights of an Arab student on the West Bank is seen to represent humanistic universalism, while a Jewish child raised in an ultra-orthodox family or living in a Gush Emunim settlement is considered an object worthy only of contempt.

It can be said, therefore, that, with respect to the issue of Jewish self-determination, Israeli society finds itself in an ideological vacuum. On the political level, the effect of the "ideological vacuum" is a largely "negative" form of political involvement. Even among those political factions which are ostensibly in favor of "progress" there is a nearly total lack of formulated, meaningful alternatives to that which they would negate. Their political activity is focused on finding fault with rival factions, while no attempt is made at engaging the "other side" in a dialogue on the content of Jewishness in Israel. The result is that no real challenges are set before the religious Jewish establishment—thereby weakening the influence of the more moderate elements within this sector. Tolerant members of the Oriental Jewish Community become "Ashkenazified," while the radical elements on both sides become more extreme as their fear of each other grows.

15. "Universalism, by reducing everything to the lowest common denominator, drained both lives and ideals of that specific content which alone gave them point." (I. Berlin, *Op. cit.* p. 16f).

C. Jewish Self-Determination and Modernity: Israel and the Diaspora

In recent decades a discussion has evolved relating to the issue of redefining Zionism. This issue is intimately linked to the more fundamental question of whether Zionism, as an ideology, became obsolete once the State of Israel was founded. The continued interest in these questions would appear to be an outgrowth of the search for a more closely defined collective identity. As noted above, one of the most salient aspects of Israeli identity in the 1980s is a widespread contentment with being merely "Israeli," as opposed to also being "Jewish." This dichotomy is a direct result of the realization of one of Zionism's main objectives, namely, the creation of a political framework for the practice of Jewish self-determination, but the ensuing diminution of the sense of "Jewishness" is an eventuality which Zionism failed to foresee.

The current reality is that Jewish political sovereignty is an incontrovertible fact, while, at the same time, the Jewish identity of those exercising this sovereignty is in crisis. At the heart of this crisis is the question of the extent to which democracy and Jewishness are compatible.

The principal innovation of Zionist thought is its perception of Judaism as an evolutionary process. Fundamental to this approach is the perception of man as responsible for his own destiny, and of history as man's own handiwork. Seen in this way, there is no inherent conflict between Judaism and a democratic perception of self-determination as an ongoing process. Strengthening the Jewish identity of the Israeli, that is, a synthesis of Jewishness and modern, westernized democracy, can thus be seen not as a rejection of Zionism, but as a further refining and redefining of Zionist ideology. Of primary importance in this new approach is a recognition of Zionism's own roots in the Diaspora.

Generally speaking, Jewish history has been of a dualistic nature. While some Jews have always lived in the biblical homeland, the majority were scattered throughout the world in the Diaspora. This duality, central to Jewish history, has also been a fundamental element of Jewish ideological debate, both on the theological and the political level. The reality of "diasporism" is open both to a positive and a negative interpretation, either as a creative impulse—the Babylonian approach—or as a hindrance to Jewish political sovereignty. In any case, "diasporism" is a fact of Jewish history, and its denial can serve no positive purpose. In terms of the Israeli attitude toward the past, coming to terms with the fact of the Diaspora within the context of Zionist ideology is a challenge with both educational and practical political implications, and offers a means of escaping the paralysis and impotence which have arisen through the denial of, and dissociation from, the past.

If we define the objective of revised-progressive Zionism as the

founding of a democratic Jewish society in Israel, this new Zionism will have to come to terms with the historical reality of fragmentation and diversity within the Jewish people. In other words, a necessary stage in the development of Jewish consciousness among Israelis will be the fostering of a bond between Israeli and non-Israeli Jews. For this bond to be reciprocal, a recognition of the centrality of Israel for modern Judaism must also be fostered among non-Israeli Jews. The strengthening of this bond is an essential precondition for the continued co-existence of Jews with Jews—those in Israel with those in the Diaspora.

In the history of nation-states, this situation is unique. As such, it raises an important question: Can the historical condition of the State of Israel be “normal”? Is the Israeli insistence upon its right to be a “normal” country, as opposed to remaining an expression of the unique place of the Jewish people in history, in and of itself “normal”? And, considering the unique position of the Jewish people, to what extent is the entire issue of “normality” purely hypothetical and, in fact, irrelevant to the current reality?

Attitudes regarding the desirability of “normality” for Israel range from complete opposition to any form of “normality” for the Jewish people and the rejection of the “like-all-nations” motif in the Israeli political landscape (of which George Steiner is a good representative), to a complete rejection of all claims to Jewish uniqueness and a belief in “normality” as an existential necessity for Israel.¹⁶

Opposition to “normalization” is as old as the dream of a return to Zion, and is based on the assumption that the circumstances of exile provided the sole possible climate in which Jewish creativity in such areas as ethics, culture, science and literature could grow and flourish. In this view, in which Judaism is seen as a “light unto the nations,” the true homeland of the Jews cannot be territorially defined. Rather, it is a transcendental homeland of truth. Supporters of this view argue that Zionism, as a movement, can only serve to arouse anti-Semitic tendencies in the countries in which the Jews actually live. Israel, as a secular-Zionist political entity, is viewed as a betrayal of the religious and spiritual character of Judaism, and, as a nationalistic entity, it is in direct conflict with the universal nature of Judaism. And, not last in importance, rather than liberating the Jews from the trauma of exile, the Jewish state is seen as a potential threat to the physical welfare of those Jews who continue to live among the nations.

By contrast, adherents of the view that Israel is, and should be, “like all nations” perceive Zionism/Israel as the only cure for the pathological aspect of the Jewish identity as it grew in the Diaspora, where the concept of the Jews as a “chosen people” was prevalent.

The “like-all-nations” vs. the “light-unto-the-nations” dialectic dates

16. See: A. B. Yehoshua, *Between Right and Right* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1984).

back to the Babylonian exile and found its earliest expression in the Babylon-Jerusalem dichotomy. It is this very historical background which can provide a progressive approach to Zionism with the content needed for a definition of the "self" in a democratic Jewish Israeli. The content lies in creatively coming to terms with the contradiction inherent in accepting both the "like-all-nations" and the "light-unto-the-nations" aspects of Jewish experience. A full rejection of either of these extremes inevitably entails forgoing the attempt to provide meaning and purpose to Zionist-Jewish existence. The price of relinquishing the "like-all-nations" concept is eventual assimilation; the price of relinquishing the "light-unto-the-nations" concept is Canaanism.

Although the existence of such an extremist trend in the demand for Israeli "normality" cannot be denied, it is worth noting that the question of whether Israel should or should not be a nation "like all nations" is purely hypothetical and essentially academic. Underlying all the arguments presented above is the conviction that chosenness and universalism have long since been indelibly inscribed in the Jewish collective consciousness and that they represent an inseparable part of the Jewish code of values. Even a modern, western democratic Israel cannot and, indeed, need not neglect this basic fact. The idea of "chosenness" is an expression of the Jewish nation's perception of itself as unique and has proved a source of spiritual creativity among the Jews. In this sense, it merely defines the "otherness" of the Jewish people, just as the "otherness" of other peoples rests on those characteristics which are unique to them. The chosenness of the Jewish people need not have any bearing on the issue of their "normality" or "abnormality" as a people. The "messianic" and "universalistic" traits ascribed to the Jews, the traits which make them "other" from other nations, is presumably largely a function of the fact that the Jews, alone among the nations, are a "diaspora" people.

The perception of the Jews as a people by the "others," that is, by the peoples among whom they live, depends both on the manner in which the Jews, as a people, represent themselves and on the ways in which their "otherness" is perceived by the nations. The perception of that otherness reflects a set of expectations. Over the generations it became the source of cumulative anti-Semitism, continuing over generations in accordance with the ways in which the Jews fulfilled or disappointed those expectations.

The return to Zion was seen as a means of changing the political circumstances in which Jewish "otherness" would be able to exist. It was not intended to bring about a change in the essence of that "otherness," which was to remain ethical-universal in character.

In the late 1980s, over ten years after the UN resolution equating Zionism with racism, we have seen that the perception of Jewish otherness, as a reflection of anomalous expectations and a source of anti-

Semitism, has been transferred from the Jews, as individuals, to the State of Israel. The question becomes unavoidable: Is it at all possible to escape this “otherness”? *Ought* we escape it?

Given the unique circumstances of Jewish history, the success of the State of Israel in effecting a democratic Jewish society is predicated on its ability to define itself within the context of that history—to come to terms with the dialectic of the universal vs. the particular, of the concepts of “like all nations” vs. “light unto the nations.” If this is to be achieved, a strong connection is essential between the Israelis and the Diaspora Jews, whereby both are aware of their place in the duality of Jewish history and in the Jewish present. While the likelihood of translating this aspiration from theory into practice would appear less than promising under present circumstances, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, it should be remembered that a hundred years ago the prospects of translating the Zionist idea into reality did not appear any better.

In looking for ways to achieve a stronger connection between the Jews of Israel and those of the Diaspora, a broader discussion will be necessary. A number of general guidelines may be suggested:

First, a “strong connection” implies the development of new forms of Diaspora-Jewish involvement in shaping Israeli reality; specifically, involvement in both the “what” and “how” of democratic Jewish self-determination.

Second, increased involvement in Israeli affairs by Diaspora Jews will call for a redefinition of the modes of expressing membership in, and affiliation with, the Jewish people in the new reality that has been created by the existence—for the first time in 2000 years—of a sovereign Jewish political entity. The central issue here is the extent to which citizens of one nation-state can become involved in the existential questions, in the very life of another nation-state. Such involvement is, by its very nature, partial, so that, in the particular case of the Jews and Israel, a question also arises as to whether partial involvement in Israeli life does not connote an equally partial Jewish identity, proportionate to the degree of involvement.

Third, it must be recognized that the involvement of Diaspora Jews in Israeli affairs reaches its natural limits at the point where the decision-making process begins.

And, finally, given the growing polarization of Israeli society, and assuming a commitment to “Jewish unity,” we have little choice but to face up to the task of Jewish-Jewish co-operation. The Jews of Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora will have to work together to increase the level of fluidity in the Israeli way of life, to create a model which allows for a high level of diversity in the reality of Jewish living.

Ruth—A Pure Dove of Israel

FRIEDA CLARK HYMAN

THE THEME OF *MEGILLAT RUTH* IS, UNEQUIVOCALLY, Redemption. There is nothing subtle about it. The final paragraph, indeed, the final verse, spells it out, summing up, as it does, the generations leading to King David. David is, in fact, the very last word of this Scroll: "And Jesse sired David." What must be obvious to the most casual reader is that this name evokes the Mëssiah, since it is from David's seed that the Messiah will arise.

Redemption, a Messianic Redemption, is, according to tradition, cosmic; it embraces all of mankind. Thus, the Moabite Ruth, by her inclusion in the genealogy of David, becomes part of the eventual salvation of humanity.

Well, it can be asked, what of it? Someone had to be an ancestress of David, hence an ancestress of the Messiah. True; but should it have been a Moabite?

Certainly, of all the ancient nations, Moab and Ammon, too, have the ugliest beginning: incest. Indeed, so repulsive is their origin that Midrash has David complaining about the taunts that he suffers because of his Moabite lineage.¹

Moreover, Deut. 23:4 specifically forbids a Moabite or Ammonite from entering the congregation of Israel. But how can such an interdiction stand before the character of Ruth as portrayed in this Scroll? It could not and, therefore, the Rabbis circumvented it by invoking a literal translation: Moabite, they said, is forbidden, not Moabite; Ammonite, not Ammonite. The Tanna, Yehoshua ben Hananiah went further. He ruled that "Sennacherib long ago came upon these lands and confused the whole world." This, then, made it impossible to classify any person according to race.² Yehoshua's response, by the way,

1. *Midrash Rabbah*, Ruth 8:1.

Because of this interdiction, some scholars put the authorship of *Megillat Ruth* and, also, of *Jonah*, at the time of Ezra, circa 440B.C.E. Why? Because *Megillat Ruth*, in contrast to the unbending insularity of Ezra, speaks kindly, even glowingly, of this non-Jewess. Similarly, in *Jonah*, the non-Jews are described as more sensitive than the Hebrew Prophet. Captain and crew of the ship behave humanely to Jonah, trying to save him from death, although they know that he is responsible for their mortal peril. Even the savage Assyrians become penitents, to the dismay of Jonah, who, as Prophet, is supposed to be tuned into Divinity. Thus, both these works soften the impact of Ezra's commandments, especially that of forcing the Judeans to divorce their alien wives.

2. *Mishnah*, *Yad* 4:4.

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was in response to the request of Judah the Ammonite for admission to *Klal Yisrael*.

Ruth's deeds are so evocative, they remind us of our Father Abraham. She left her land, as did Abraham, her homeland, as did Abraham, her father's house, as did Abraham, to go to an unknown country, as did Abraham.

Hers, however, was a more heroic step. The call to Abraham, after all, was from God. Who called Ruth? Naomi? But it was precisely Naomi who would send her back to her land, her god, and to her mother's house.

Then why did she insist on cleaving to Naomi, on following her to a land that she had never seen? What we must bear in mind is that, in those days, to abandon one's land meant to abandon one's god. To go to Bethlehem in Judea was to accept the God of Judea. So much was this a part of ancient man's perspective that David curses the men who, he said, ". . . have driven me this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of the Lord, saying: 'Go serve other gods'."³

Why did Ruth seek that land and, more important, that God? What kindness had she reaped at His hand? Naomi herself put it succinctly upon her return to Bethlehem. To her former neighbors who greet her, wondering whether she is, indeed, Naomi, she says: "Call me not Naomi, call me Marah, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (1:20).

And, indeed, He has. Her husband and her two sons lie buried in Moab. Again, to quote her, she adds: "I went out full, and the Lord has brought me back home empty." In this sentence, by the way, we find two of the four key words of this Scroll: full, empty. The other two, as we shall see, are cover, uncover.

However, it is not only Naomi who has suffered. Her daughters-in-law have, as well. Their husbands, Naomi's sons, have left them widowed and childless; two calamities. What, then, drew Ruth to Judea and to Judea's God? We must conjure with this later.

Whatever her reasons, and though her sister-in-law, Orpah, finally turns back, Ruth refuses to be rejected. "Your people shall be my people, your God, my God," she says, and with the not-to-be-denied oath, she adds; ". . . the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part you and me" (1: 16, 17).

Because of this unwavering determination of Ruth the Moabitess, she not only becomes part of Israel, but is wed by a scion of presumably one of the most illustrious families. Her dogged resolution seems to disappear, however, with Naomi's acquiescence or, rather, submission before Ruth's importuning. From then on it is Ruth who becomes the submissive one, obeying Naomi completely. It is Naomi who guides her

3. Samuel 26:19.

daughter-in-law to the marriage with Boaz and to her own role as great-grandmother of David.

To reinforce this unique status, *Megillat Ruth* has the Elders and villagers of Bethlehem bless her and Boaz: "The Lord make the woman that is come unto your house like Rachel and Leah, which did build the house of Israel" (4:11). Thus, Ruth is made part and parcel of this seminal company.

More, if we extend the last sentence of this Scroll, "And Jesse sired David" to "and David sired Solomon, and Solomon sired Reheboam," we would see that Ammon, the other outcast nation, also becomes an ancestor of the Messiah. For Reheboam's mother is none other than Naamah, a princess of Ammon. Solomon married her, as he did many foreign princesses, to seal his alliances. And, as though to clinch the legitimacy of Ruth and Naamah, the Talmud calls them the "two pure doves of Israel."⁴

Ruth, then, despite her Moabite lineage, is part of the messianic line. If, however, the redemptive arrow pointed only to the future, we could close this discussion here, or just dwell upon the lyrical and pastoral character of this Scroll. For *Megillat Ruth* is a delightful and charming portrayal of village life in Judea, set in the time of the Judges.

The book of Judges, on the other hand, is hardly a lyrical interlude. On the contrary, it is replete with violence; with war, treachery, idolatry and death. There are few more grisly incidents than that of the Levite and his concubine.⁵ Oddly enough, it is in Bethlehem that this concubine is born. Her conduct, though questionable, hardly merited the treacherous deed of her husband, the vicious assault of the Benjaminites, or her horrendous death.

Were we to assay the life of Israel on the basis of the book of Judges, we would have to conclude that it was a period of unrelieved trouble and discord. Without the insights of *Megillat Ruth* we would have no reason to think otherwise.

But this Scroll is ours to read. We see villagers bustling about, involving themselves in each other's lives; women greeting Naomi, mourning with her, rejoicing with her and, finally, blessing her. We see men sowing seeds, harvesting, caring for the poor, and conferring for the fulfillment of the Law.

Language is courtly; concern between neighbors is apparent. One wonders how anyone from Bethlehem could be remiss in his conduct: the concubine sexually or that young Levite who agrees to serve an idol.⁶ After all, if Ruth, an alien, can fit in so tellingly, why should not all Bethlehemites be equally gracious?

4. *Baba Kamma* 38b.

5. Judges, chap. 19, to the end of the book.

6. Judges 19:2 and 17:7–12.

Most are. The greeting between Boaz and his reapers is both stately and ritualistic. The dialogue between Boaz and Ruth is courtly and paternalistic. Clearly, he is smitten by her. Even a well is nearby, a telling sign that this encounter may lead to marriage.⁷ But his language remains kind, protective, giving no hint of his innermost feelings, nor, indeed, of any ulterior motive.

Ruth also speaks in this same idiom. With exquisite tact she asks her mother-in-law to allow her to glean after the harvesters, as though Naomi would be bestowing a singular favor upon her; as though by thus gleaning and, incidentally, performing what is legally hers to do, she were not sparing Naomi this somewhat humiliating experience. It is the use of *na*, of "please," that makes this plea so sensitive. Surely this Scroll is altogether delightful. The aura of Redemption that envelops it is an additional boon.

However, there is more, much more. *Megillat Ruth* is not only concerned with the future, but with the past as well, with those specific individuals who are directly involved in the genealogy of David. Through the person of this Moabitess, those ancestors whose conduct was lacking are, in a sense, redeemed. Why, we must ask, are they in need of expiation?

There are, as we already know, two nations merging within the person of David: Moab and Israel. Let us start with Moab.

Its beginnings are hardly a mystery, since this nation was created out of an incestuous act: between Lot, the nephew of Abraham, and Lot's daughters. The elder of the two remaining ones slept with her father after first making him drunk. The next night, she ordered her younger sister to do the same. The son born to the older is Moab; the son of the second, Ben Ami, is the father of Ammon.

What may strike us immediately about this episode is the bond between Lot and Naomi. Naomi is left with two daughters-in-law; Lot with two daughters. Naomi is a widow; Lot has just become a widower.

Nevertheless, it is the plight of the two daughters of Lot that gives us pause. According to the text, these are two women who profess to believe that they are the only females left in the world; two women in a cave in the mountains, in a kind of earth womb, which, in Erich Neumann's words, ". . . subconsciously remind them . . . of their own inner caves that wait to be fructified."⁹ Thus, we could be reminded of that emptiness which Naomi describes on her return to Bethlehem. And, thus, these two do what they must to populate the world; they sleep with their father, Lot, who, according to them, is the only male left.

7. Boaz refers to the well, when he says to Ruth, "And drink of the water the young men draw." The well is also present when Rebecca meets Eliezer, when Rachel meets Jacob, and when Moses meets the daughters of Jethro, among whom is Zipporah.

8. Genesis 19:30-38.

9. N. Aschkenasy, *Eve's Journey* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press 1986), p. 86.

However, if we stop to consider, we must ask ourselves how truthful they were in their thinking and their conclusion. Did they honestly believe that they and their father were the only humans left in the world? Had they gone directly to the mountains as the messengers (angels) commanded, we could understand their conduct. But they had not. Lot had pleaded to be allowed to flee to Zoar, a city close by, instead of to the mountains. And the messengers had agreed. Indeed, they had assured him that they would not begin the acts of destruction until Lot and his family were safe.

But even Zoar had not reassured Lot; hence his continued flight to this cave in which they sheltered. What should puzzle us, is the significance of the Zoar interlude. What could it mean, seeing that they ended up in the mountains, as they had originally been directed? Surely we are being told something, are we not? And, indeed, we are. We are told that they knew that they were not the only women alive. Nor was Lot the only male left. They had just left a city, a small one to be sure, but a city, nevertheless, harboring other mortals. Then why did these women decide that they must sleep with their father?

To plumb the depth of this event, we must look beyond the cave and the destruction of Sodom. What do we know of the relationship of these daughters and their father? What we know is horrifying. These are the very daughters, the ones “who had never known a man,” whom Lot was willing to throw to the violent Sodomites. “Use them as you wish,” he had said, “only do not touch these men who have come under the protection of my roof.”¹⁰

What if the Sodomites had agreed? Or what if the messengers had not intervened? Not only would sexual assault have ensued over and over again, but death would have overtaken the two girls, as it had the concubine of the Levite in Judges 19:27. What kind of father could sacrifice his children upon such a bestial alter? What was his reasoning? Exactly like that of the old man who was prepared to give his daughter to the Benjaminites who, like the men of Sodom, surrounded his house and demanded his guest, the Levite.

Hospitality, the sheltering of guests, the “protection of (my) roof” was the more important good for Lot. Paternal instincts obviously disappeared completely before this overriding *mizvah*. Or was it possible that paternal love for daughters was non-existent? Were girls, women, of such little account that fathers disposed of them without any regrets?

Yet, Lot was Abraham’s nephew. And Sarah, a woman, was his aunt. No one could overlook a Sarah. As for the dreadful fate of the concubine at the hands of the Benjaminites, so visceral was the reaction of the other tribes of Israel that it precipitated a bloody war. “Wicked,” “lewd,” “wanton,” were some of the adjectives used to describe this lust

10. Genesis 19:8.

of the Benjaminites. "Such a thing had never been seen since the children of Israel went out of Egypt, until this day," the eleven tribes declared. Indeed, we merely have to hear the anguished cry of Jephthah when his daughter came forth to greet him, to know how dear daughters were to biblical fathers.¹¹

We must, therefore, conclude that Lot was an unnatural father, besides being a drunkard, as tradition declares. His proposal to the men of Sodom would hardly be forgotten by these daughters. It must have seethed within them; it demanded some form of retaliation. Thus, in a fine and sardonic reversal, these two who were to be raped (and killed) at the suggestion, no, the offer, of their father, now sexually assault this very father. If to have intercourse through deceit, or, as in this case, by depriving the partner of responsibility, is an act of violence, then this is precisely what these women do. For it cannot be denied that, were Lot in control of himself, he would not have consented to such a depravity. Therefore, we may conclude that the daughters raped their father.

The Bible does not judge them, but neither does it dignify them with a name; just the Elder and the Younger, as though any other designation were unmerited. To us, they are the incestuous mothers of Moab and Ammon, while Lot is a figure of ignominy and disgrace. All three were worthy citizens of Sodom.

Through Ruth, both Moab and Ammon are given a share in the redemptive process. Both are ancestors of the Messiah, the very nations whom the Bible bans. It would be fitting, therefore, to add those two sentences to this Scroll: "And David sired Solomon. And Solomon sired Reheboam." Thus, Naamah, the Ammonite princess would also be awarded her rightful place in the Davidic line.

But Moab is only part of David's lineage. There is Israel as well. Indeed, when, in the Midrash, David complains of being taunted for his Moabite descent, the same Midrash replies: "Look upon your own (Jewish) genealogy and be still . . . Have you then an honorable descent?" What could Midrash mean?

As Ruth becomes the great-grandmother of David, Boaz becomes his great-grandfather. And it is Boaz's son, Oved, who takes place in the messianic chain. There is nothing disreputable in either Oved, the son, or in the forefathers of Boaz. On the contrary, his is a most distinguished family. Boaz's grandfather, Nahshon ben Amminadab, was not only head of the tribe of Judah, but, traditionally, the most courageous of those who left Egypt. It was he who had plunged into the Sea of Reeds, even before the waters had parted.

All of this family are upstanding citizens, unless we go back to the

11. Judges 19:35: "And it came to pass when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said: 'Alas my daughter, you have brought me very low' . . ."

founder of the tribe, to Judah himself. What is reprehensible in Judah's past? His marriage to a Canaanite woman? Undoubtedly, though the Bible does not censure him. Perhaps because of that more heinous deed: the sale of Joseph. True, he suggested it in order to save his brother's life. But, unlike Reuben, who planned to return and rescue Joseph from the pit, Judah never expected to see the youth again. He was, in fact, sending his flesh and blood away forever into bondage in a foreign land.

On the other hand, Judah needed no redeemer. He expiated his deed when he appeared before Joseph the second time. Again with a telling irony, he who had sold Joseph into slavery, then offered himself as a slave to this very Joseph in place of his brother, Benjamin. Why? For the sake of his father, Jacob. It is precisely at this moment that Joseph breaks down and reveals himself. Judah's purgative submission is the proof that Joseph had awaited; he knew, then, that his brothers were truly penitent.

But if not Judah, and if not the other ancestors of Boaz, who, then required expiation? Chapter 38 of Genesis contains the answer; not an ancestor, but an ancestress: Tamar. This is hardly a unique discovery. Indeed, Midrash names her explicitly as the tainted forebear. Moreover, many have pointed out the connection between Tamar and *Megillat Ruth*. For one thing, Tamar, too, is involved with *yibbum*, Levirate marriage. Indeed, this chapter and our Scroll are the only two places in Scripture that deal with this union.

It is also appropriate to remind ourselves that both Judah and Naomi have lost two sons. One can sympathize with Judah in holding back Shelah, his third son, from Tamar, being afraid that he would lose him as well. Yet, it is neither the Levirate marriage, nor the dire fate of the sons that connects this incident with our Scroll. What truly binds these episodes is the determination of Tamar to insure her role within the generations of Israel, as Ruth would also do. But, unlike Ruth, Tamar reveals nothing of her latent strength at first. She is, to all appearances, a compliant young woman. Wed to Er, then widowed, she accepts his brother, Onan, in a Levirate marriage. With his death, she returns in widow weeds to her father's house at the command of Judah, expecting to become the wife of Shelah, the third son. For Judah is unquestionably the head of the family. Though, like Naomi, he has lost two sons, he is not the broken or empty vessel that she becomes. His seal, signet, and staff are the appurtenances of a substantial citizen. Moreover, he is the owner of flocks of sheep. It is when he is on his way to Timnah to shear them that it dawns upon Tamar that she will not be given to Shelah.

At this point, the forceful woman emerges. Swiftly, purposefully, she strips herself of her widow's clothes and puts on those of a harlot. Why a harlot? For two reasons. First, because she intends to lure Judah,

and how else could she do that? And second, in order to seduce him she must not be recognized. As a prostitute, she is able to cover her face, indeed, is required to do so.

But this is more than deceit; it is an incestuous act, and she knows it. Like Lot's daughters, she rapes a father, in her case, a father-in-law. For had Judah known her, he would have shunned her. True, he acknowledges that he has done her an injustice, that he has withheld She-lah. But neither he nor anyone else can defend the ugly nature of this relationship. Never again does Judah sleep with her. On the other hand, as in the case of Lot's daughters, the text does not condemn her. Was it because, as Alter suggests, hers was a case of "measure for measure?" As Judah had deceived his father, Jacob, concerning Joseph's fate, so Tamar, in turn, deceives him.

If so, both father-in-law and daughter-in-law receive a curious reward. Judah, unlike his own father, does not mourn the loss of a son. On the contrary, he becomes, once more, father of three sons. For Tamar gives birth to twins: Zerah and Peretz. It is as though she were compensating in a way for the deaths of Er and Onan. To be sure, she remains a widow, but she has secured her place in the chronicles of her people—her goal all along. Peretz, the youngest, becomes the ancestor of Boaz, hence, of David.

Both the similarity and contrast between Tamar and Ruth are vivid. Tamar displays strength later in life, Ruth at the very beginning of this Scroll. But once having secured a place in the Judean world, she softens her stance. And whereas Tamar succeeds through covering herself, Ruth does just the opposite. She uncovers; she uncovers the feet of Boaz, according to Naomi's instructions, while asking him to cover her with his garment. And what word does she use? Not *begeg* nor *me'il*, but *kanaf*, a wing. Why *kanaf*? Because its use evokes the exact words of Boaz when first they met (11:12): "The Lord reward your work, and be your reward complete from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings. (*kenafaim*) you have come to take refuge."

The *kenafaim*, the wings that Boaz invokes, are divine. Thus, the sequence is from God to man, a sequence that Ruth initiates by uncovering, which, in turn, elicits a covering, a protection. And here we have the singular difference between Ruth and Tamar. Ruth, in her frank, almost guileless manner, achieves *yibbum* and Oved, a son. Tamar fills her womb through deceit. Yet, there is a bond between them. And that bond is made explicit in the blessing of the Elders and the villagers: "May your house," they say to Boaz, "be like the House of Peretz whom Tamar bore unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give you of this young woman" (4:12). Through this Moabite woman, this Ruth, Tamar is redeemed, as were Lot and his daughters.

The alacrity with which Boaz agrees to buy Elimelech's inheritance and, of course, to wed Ruth, makes us wonder why he did not propose

to her sooner. The answer is revealed in his response to her: “. . . you have shone more kindness in the end than at the beginning, inasmuch as you did not follow the young men, whether poor or rich” (3:10). Clearly, then, Ruth is considerably younger than Boaz; hence, he did not think himself a suitable husband for her.

The tryst on the threshing floor has raised many an eyebrow. What did take place that night? Even Naomi asks upon Ruth's return, “Who are you, my daughter?” (3:16). In other words, are you the untouched Ruth, or the violated one? Are you dishonored or betrothed? In the light of every step, every legal and traditional step that Ruth and Boaz take, it is logical to assume they did not fracture that honorable process. It would have been completely out of character, certainly for Boaz, to have behaved in any other way. She lay, says the text, at his feet, not the usual place for sexual play.

What is touching is the care that Boaz takes to protect Ruth's name. He has already testified to her sterling reputation and he is determined that she retain it. Therefore, he makes her leave before sunrise before anyone might recognize her. But if Boaz has not filled her as a man fills a woman, he does so with food, an important substitute for her and her mother-in-law, who have no harvest of their own. In fact, from the moment when Boaz meets Ruth, he becomes her provider. Thus, we read as early as 2:4 that Ruth ate and was satisfied and had enough left for Naomi. Now, in this pre-dawn, he heaps six measures of barley onto her mantle. According to Ruth, he says, “Do not return to your mother-in-law empty.”

Boaz does not delay the Levirate process. The very next day he asks the kinsman closer to Elimelech, his elder brother, Tob, (according to Midrash) to purchase Elimelech's portion. Tob is willing until he realizes that he must accept Ruth. He must perform *yibbum*.

The central word of this transaction is, appropriately enough, *ga'ol*, redeem. It will be uttered in all its permutations no less than twelve times. At this moment, Boaz, not Ruth, is the redeemer. But his is a physical, a concrete redemption, one which purchases the inheritance of Elimelech and takes Ruth for his wife. Nevertheless, the use of *ga'ol* so repetitiously sets the stage for the announcement of David, Father of the Messiah, of *geulah*.

Often, throughout this story, it seemed more fitting to call this Scroll *Megillat Naomi*. Indeed, at the beginning of this essay, we wondered why Ruth was so determined to accept a God who had dealt so harshly with her. By now it is clear that it could only have been because of Naomi's conduct that both her daughters-in-law cleaved to her, were prepared to surrender their past. In fact, Midrash supports this by seeing within the name of Ruth, the verb *ra-oh*, see. And what did Ruth see? She saw the heroic stance of Naomi as a reflection of the strength and nobility of Judaism, of her people, and of her God.

Through Naomi's guidance and instruction of her Moabite daughter-in-law, this older woman could initiate a redemptive process. But she could only initiate. Ruth had to be the instrument of this salvational history. She belonged to both Moab and Israel. She, alone, could redeem those ancestors whose sons would merge into the ultimate Redemption: the King Messiah.

Surely, it must seem a curious choice; the House of David a House of *geulah*, of Redemption. Were there not families within the tribe of Judah more worthy of kingship? Why should Scripture have seized upon a scion of such dubious ancestry? Midrash, too, raises this issue implicitly, by questioning even David's Judaic lineage. So strange is this election that one must conclude that it was deliberate. As though Scripture were telling us that each man or woman is master or mistress of his or her fate. *Zekhut avot*, the merit of ancestors, or its lack thereof, does not prevent the individual from taking his life into his own hands.

David was a very complex personality. He touched bottom in his treatment of Uriah and in his paternal indulgences. But he also touched heaven in his relationship to Jonathan, to Saul, to his men. Poetry and music surcharged his being; pride and penitence struggled within him. In short, he was human. Whatever his shortcomings, he welded Israel into a strong and united nation. His was a peak era, despite the conflicts within his own family. If, as Mar Samuel maintained, the messianic reign meant essentially independence for Israel, then it is little wonder that David was singled out as the forefather of the Messiah. Indeed, not only the pious Jew, but every Jew would look forward to the renewal of such a reign.

Man and Universe in Greek and Hebrew Perception

MORDECAI ROSHWALD

1.

WHEN ONE LOOKS AT THE PHYSICAL REMnants of the ancient Greek civilization—the statues, the reliefs, the painted vases—one cannot but gain the impression that here we face a world in which man is the centre of human endeavor. And it is humanity in its earthly manifestation that is the focus of Greek civilization. Why else carve statues which reveal human anatomy in its perfection, each limb, each muscle, true to its natural appearance, though perfected to the ideal of such natural manifestation? Why the prevalent trend to show the human body unadorned and unclad, if not because of the pride of man in being what he is? Whether Apollo or Aphrodite, or various other deities (all created in the image of man and woman), or a discus thrower, or even some semi-human centaur—they all convey the sense of the power and the glory of humanity. No other-worldly expression here, as it sometimes appears in ancient Egyptian statues, in a civilization preoccupied with the world-to-be. The Greek seems to emphasize the here and now, even to the point of immortalizing in stone a movement of the body, a passing moment in the flux of life.

Contrasting with this image is the picture gained from looking at the Hebrew civilization. “Looking” is, of course, a metaphor in this case, for the Biblical prohibition of making “any graven image, or any likeness of any thing” (Exodus 20:4) outrules any visual comparison with the Greek civilization. Thus, “looking,” in this case means forming a mental image of humanity from the Hebrew scriptures, an image which could be compared with the impression gained from the visual representations of the Greek world. Here the popular and prevalent conclusion is that humanity, as conceived in the Bible, is not happy with itself. Oppressed by the yoke of statutes and commandments, tempted by sin and allotted punishment, mankind is far from the frolicking satyrs and nymphs, far from happiness, from self-satisfaction. None of the narcissistic self-love of mankind, which seems to dominate the Greek world, is to be found here. If man and woman had been happy at their creation, their sin was soon followed by divine curse and punishment. If the children of Israel had been assured divine guidance and protection,

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no sooner were these assurances given than they started to sin and their punishment was meted out. If there is a way out of this morass for man, it is by living in the fear of the Lord, by curbing the enjoyment of his body and by repressing his allegedly evil impulses. Rather than express his humanity in a joyous way, man must check and control himself. To live in a way true to his human self would be sinful.

Thus, Hellenism and Hebraism reflect the contrast between free, happy, self-fulfilling humanity, and repressed, subdued, God-fearing mankind. Hellenism is full of joy of life, immersed in pleasure and pleasure-seeking, full of sunshine and spontaneous joy. Hebraism lives in the shadow of the commandments of an omnipotent deity, who imposes a strict rule of justice and has little patience for human frailty. Man has no choice but to bend under the yoke of the Almighty.

Yet, this popular image of the two civilizations does not stand up to a closer scrutiny. Notably, when we focus on mythology (conveyed through drama in the Greek world) and historiography, the comparison of the two world pictures offers a different contrast.

2.

Greek drama, which largely uses mythological themes, is enveloped in the sense of human tragedy. The nature of that tragedy may vary from drama to drama, but the sense of calamity persists. The outcome of the drama may be partly due to the action of the protagonists, but the overriding impression is that the *dramatis personae* are subject to some higher forces against which they are powerless and which lead them to horrible acts and terrible suffering. The characters, though seemingly autonomous agents, often appear to be no more than puppets in the hands of gods, or of some mysterious force that is more powerful than gods.

A prominent example in this respect is Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. All the sterling qualities of Oedipus, a brave man and a just ruler, cannot save him from the pre-ordained destiny which propels him, unwittingly, to commit the dreadful crimes of patricide and incest. Then, from the height of his power and the peak of his success, he is cast into the depths of degradation and misery.

The case of Oedipus is generalized to convey a philosophy of the human condition. In the words of the Chorus which conclude the drama,

Therefore wait to see life's ending ere thou count one mortal blest;
Wait till free from pain and sorrow he has gained his final rest.¹

Man is but a pawn in the hands of an incomprehensible fate. He faces disasters at every step, so that his death might be conceived of as a

1. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, translated by F. Storr, Loeb Classical Library. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, and London: William Heinemann, 1912), lines 1528–1530.

happy ending only if, during his lifetime, he had succeeded in avoiding the pitfalls of sin and suffering. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the downfall of man; he is the victim of some mysterious doom or chance which cannot be comprehended, or for which there may be no explanation. In the words of Sophocles in *Antigone*,

For Fortune with a constant ebb and rise
Casts down and raises high and low alike . . .²

This meaninglessness of human endeavor is reflected in other dramas. In Euripides' *Electra*, as well as in the drama with the same title by Sophocles, Orestes, at the behest of his sister, Electra, kills their mother, Clytemnestra, to avenge her killing of their father and her husband, Agamemnon. Yet, this assassination, too, was a revenge for Agamemnon's sacrifice of his and Clytemnestra's daughter, Iphigenia, in order to facilitate the naval expedition against Troy, embarked upon because of the wanton behaviour of Clytemnestra's sister, Helen. The moment Clytemnestra is slain, the deed is regretted by the children, but it is too late. Thus, the heroes, each of whom has *some* justification for his deed, are plunged into the abyss of blood and family murder. A tragedy of noble motivation and horrid action envelops all, and the nobility of the protagonists, or of some of them, cannot save them from disaster. Again, man is a victim of forces which, even if he gives them a human interpretation—justice, retribution, love of parent or of child—elude human control. He is a pawn, acting against himself. Characteristically, in Euripides' *Orestes*, the hero kills his mother's sister, Helen, who was brought back from Troy by Menelaus after the Greek victory. Thus, the futility of the great Trojan expedition is exhibited.

To be sure, there are dramas in which the actions of the protagonists are not futile and senseless, as in the case of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*. Prometheus, though a god, can be interpreted as the ideal of a heroic and selfless man, dedicated to the salvation of humanity by providing the foundations of civilization. His act, against the explicit instructions of Zeus, does attain its objective. However, Prometheus, himself, is condemned by Zeus to a cruel punishment. In other words, the act of charity brings not a reward but a punishment. The rule of the supreme power—in this case Zeus rather than doom, destiny, or chance—is iniquitous and cruel.

What are the implications for humanity in the philosophy which underlies the Greek drama? It seems that man is unsure of his fate, and of the relationship between his action and its consequences. The intent and the result may be far apart. Man is not a free agent in the sense that he can steer his way through life. He is not born free. He is born into slavery to gods or fate. If, in a heroic deed like that of Pro-

2. Sophocles, *Antigone*, translation and edition as above, lines 1158–1159. "Fortune" is the translation of *týche*, which also means "chance."

metheus, man does act freely and achieves his aim, he has to pay for it in suffering. Thus, we have either a tragedy of futility, or a tragedy of iniquity.

Is there no pragmatic way for a reasonably satisfying life, for a modicum of happiness, for pleasant existence? There *may* be, but it has to be sought in a combination of humility and reason or good sense. Prometheus overreaches himself, and Zeus does not tolerate *hubris*. Man must recognize his limitations vis-à-vis the gods and fate. In *Antigone*, Kreon does not listen to the sound advice of his son, but proudly and blindly sticks to his principle. When, eventually, he decides to follow sensible counsel and change his course of action, it is too late. One must be sensible in time. In the concluding words of the Chorus,

Of happiness the chiefest part
Is a wise heart . . .³

In other words, wisdom is the most important factor determining happiness.

Does this mean that Antigone, too, is guilty of *hubris* and is lacking in wisdom and good sense? Perhaps Sophocles includes her, too, and perhaps not. In any case, she becomes the victim, if not of her own *hubris*, then of Kreon's overreaching himself. Even if she is just and noble, she suffers, as does her sensible bridegroom, Haemon, the son of Kreon, whose advice is not heeded in time by his father.

The upshot of the matter is that the most which man can aspire to is a niche in a universe which is controlled by incomprehensible and alien forces. If he is not unduly unlucky, he may spend his life in tranquility in a humble corner. The universe is a strange setting and one cannot, emotionally and rationally, feel a part of it. If one escapes the notice of the inimical forces, one is deemed fortunate. Tragedy envelops human existence, and all one can do is to look for escape in a humble posture of self-effacement and self-restraint, a curbing of passion and of noble aspirations.

3.

If we examine the Hebrew myths and stories which have been incorporated into the Bible and which could have served as themes for drama, had the Hebrews developed this form of literary expression, the emerging panorama is very different from the Greek one. There is no indication here of tragedy in the Greek sense. There may be ups and downs in the fortunes of the hero of a story, there may be even a calamitous ending, but there is meaning, humanly comprehensible meaning, in the flow of events, and there is justification for the fortunes and misfortunes of the protagonists. They are not the victims of blind

3. Ibid., lines 1358–1359.

Fate, of uncontrollable forces; they participate in the shaping of events as free and responsible actors.

Take the story of Joseph and his brothers. Out of envy, the brothers want to kill him. Here we face a passion which could lead to a destructive tragedy in Greek myth. In the biblical story there are two brothers, Reuben and Judah, who want to save Joseph. True, their independent and uncoordinated efforts lead to the sale of Joseph into slavery, but at least his life is saved; cruelty is mitigated by humanity and humanity gains the upper hand. The sterling qualities of Joseph make him succeed even as a slave, but his virtue lands him in prison. Seemingly, fate is blind to virtue. But not for long, for the temporary adversity is only a prelude to the great success at Pharaoh's court and Joseph's ascendancy to a virtual rule over Egypt. When Joseph encounters his brothers, there is no gory enactment of revenge, as one might have encountered in a Greek drama under such circumstances, but magnanimity and compassion. Indeed, Joseph allays the understandable fear of his brothers by suggesting that their act was engineered by God to enable him, Joseph, to provide for his father and brothers during the famine. "For God did send me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5). Brotherly love and compassion prevail over envy and hatred.

In the story of Jacob, the hero endures the hardship of exile and then is cheated by Laban who gives him Leah as wife, instead of Rachel. Evidently, a shrewd man like Jacob cannot pursue his aims with an unqualified success. But, then, this must not be interpreted as man's impotence in the face of higher forces. For Jacob cheated his brother, Esau, out of his primogeniture. Thus, there is justice in his becoming the victim of a swindle. Man can steer his way in life, but if he does so dishonestly, he must pay a penalty. One must act in life in accordance with the principles of righteousness, as Joseph does, in order to meet an unqualified success.

In the case of Samson, one of the judges of Israel whose life story is clearly embellished by myth, there seem to be clear ingredients of tragedy in the ending. Yet, there are important differences. Though endowed with heroic qualities and though committed to the salvation of his people, Samson also has a flaw—his attraction to the women of the Philistines, the oppressors of Israel. It is this flaw which leads to his capture and to his death. Yet, the wicked, the Philistines, are punished, too. Their cruelty, entertaining themselves by the blinded Samson, is paid for by calamity. Thus, the tragedy of both Samson and the Philistines is not a senseless act of Fate or Chance. It is comprehensible to man and even justifiable by the stern moral yardstick of biblical ethics.

The Hebrew fables follow their distinctive pattern because they are based on the belief that man's place in the universe is neither enveloped in mystery nor is it senseless. The universe was created by God

and He found it to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31). It is ruled by Him in accordance with the principles of justice. Men, as long as they act in line with these principles, can be confident of attaining their desirable aims. Evil is punished and good is rewarded and, once man knows these rules and abides by them, he can be confident about his destiny. Subject to these basic principles, man is free to steer his way in life. He need not fear the envy of God, and there is no sin of *hubris* in man’s attempt to perform great deeds. If Joseph, because of his ambitious dreams was found arrogant by his brothers, this was not a case of Greek *hubris*. In the eyes of God, man is free to dream of great projects. Moses could undertake to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, without any concern of overreaching himself. Indeed, he did so on divine authority and the Lord, far from being concerned about human *hubris*, provided encouragement and support for the hesitant and diffident Moses.

In such a world man does not feel alienated, reduced to searching for a humble abode where he would not offend the gods or challenge Fate. He can live in bright sunshine, confident of harmony between himself and God who rules the universe.

Moreover, God created man “in his own image” (Genesis 1:27) and gave him dominion over the rest of the living world (Genesis 1:26). In the words of the Psalmist, the Lord made man “little lower than the angels” and crowned “him with glory and honour” (Psalm 8:6). One could say that man has become the viceroy in the kingdom of God.

This implies that man is not only a beneficiary of divine benevolence, but also a participant in the management of the world. Translated into the realm of conduct, this means that man is not only expected to follow in the way of the Lord and abide by His commandments, but also actively “to pursue justice” (Deuteronomy 16:20). He becomes God’s partner, active partner, in the sustenance and promotion of righteousness.

Indeed, this concern about justice allows man to question God as to His actions, as Abraham did over the Almighty’s decision to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” he exclaims (Genesis 18:25). Such a challenge would have been the height of *hubris* in Greek drama. But it is not considered a transgression in the biblical story. *Huzpah* motivated by the quest for justice is allowed by the Almighty, for, in the last resort, He is the symbol of justice.

If the Greeks created their gods in the image of man, the Hebrews perceived humanity in the image of divine perfection. At least, they assumed that man can strive to such perfection and this striving is not a futile attempt leading to a tragedy, but a fruitful effort which can be crowned with success. The higher the ethical goal, the better man is, in the eyes of God. And the righteous will also have their just reward.

Thus, as long as his actions are just, the Hebrew walks through life confident that he is in his right milieu, reliant on the protection of God.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4). If he is humble, that humility is the consequence of realizing how hard it is to be righteous in every walk of life, how hard it is to attain moral perfection. But it is not a self-effacing humility which denies any significance to human action and aspiration, for man's acts are important in the eyes of God and man's importance is weighed by his good deeds.

4.

The contrast between a humanity tossed by blind, or incomprehensible, Fate or Chance, and a humanity choosing its way in an ethically controlled universe, is reflected in the Greek and Hebrew traditions also with reference to communal and national destinies. Not only individuals, but nations, too, are subject to the same, or nearly the same, principles in the Hellenic and Israelite perceptions, respectively. This is reflected in the historical notions of the two civilizations.

Herodotus' account of the vicissitudes of historical personalities does not assume any meaning to the flow of events, or any moral pattern. The famous story about Polycrates, in Book III of his *History*, suggests that the very success of a historical personality is an indication of his final tragic ending. Whether it is the envy of gods, or the perversity of Destiny, which is in the way of human success, man cannot escape this adverse situation. Thus, Herodotus simply admits that he is conscious of "the perpetual instability of human fortunes."⁴

Thucydides refrains from philosophical reflection, but adheres to the presentation of facts and the exploration of the causal connections. It is human passions and national interests, or imagined interests, which are the moving forces of historical events. This rationalist approach seems to set his perception of history apart from the notion of a mysterious and inimical destiny. Yet, it does not provide an explanation either. A sense of mystery prevails. Indeed, there is a pervasive sense of tragedy in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. The plague in Athens, the Athenian ruthlessness in dealing with Melos, the catastrophic ending of the Sicilian expedition, the civil war in Korkyra—all of these seem to be manifestations of a senseless and tragic course of events which Thucydides, the historian, scrupulously relates, but which Thucydides, the civilized man, deeply deplores. The moral judgment can be addressed at history, but history proceeds independent of such judgment.⁵ The

4. Herodotus, *History*, Book I. Quoted from Arnold Toynbee, *Greek Historical Thought*, (Mentor Books, 1952), p. 31.

5. Cf. the following statement by a French student of Thucydides, Jacqueline De Romilly, *Thucydide et L'Impérialisme Athénien*, (Paris: Société D'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1947), p. 90: "Partout l'impérialisme est considéré comme un fait. Il va contre la justice, et c'est là une circonstance regrettable. Mais si la condamnation morale est certaine, elle reste secondaire . . ." (Everywhere imperialism is considered as a fact. It is against justice, and this is a re-

historical process unfolds in a domain which is not affected by morality. It remains meaningless and mysterious, a flow of events controlled by Destiny or Chance. By the same token, it reflects the alienation from history of the just and broad-minded man. In this sense, there is no difference between a history dominated by dark Destiny and a history resulting from the dark forces of human greed and folly.

Polybius, writing in the Second Century B.C.E., seems to return to the philosophy of Herodotus concerning human history.

I have watched the workings of Fortune; I know her genius for envious dealing with Mankind; and I also know that her empire is most absolute over just those cases in human life in which the victim fancies his sojourn to be most delectable and most secure.⁶

The biblical perception of history is entirely different. Here we find meaning, humanly comprehensible meaning, and morality underlying and ruling the domain of history.

It is God who acts in history, or, at least, controls it while allowing man a range of free action. God's historical involvement is best exemplified in His interference in the history of Israel. God makes Abraham into "a great and mighty nation" (Genesis 18:18), and He takes the children of Israel out of Egypt and gives them the Land of Canaan. In other words, the Hebrews perceive their own history as conducted by God. Yet, they retain the freedom of accepting divine guidance and abiding by God's commandments, or rejecting them.

The principle that God follows in enacting the history of Israel, as well as when interfering in other nations' history, is that of rewarding the righteous behavior of a people by peace and prosperity, and punishing the wicked behavior by war and misery. Thus, the wicked ways of the Canaanites justified the conquest of their land by the tribes of Israel (Deuteronomy 9:5), the arrogance of the Assyrian king would be punished (Isaiah, Chapter 10), as would that of the king of Babylon (Isaiah, Chapter 14). The book of Judges interprets the successive oppression of the tribes of Israel by various nations as due to Israel's transgressions, just as it attributes the tribes' salvation to their crying out to God for help. (See, for example, Judges 3:7–10.) It is the alleged sin of Saul—though we may take exception to the condemnation of his deeds by Samuel—which brings about the downfall of his dynasty and the transfer of rule over Israel to another one (I Samuel, Chapter 16). David's sin against Uriah is punished by the rebellion of Absalom and the attendant disgrace of the king's household (II Samuel 12:11–12).

grettable situation. But if moral censure is certain, it remains secondary . . .) Thucydides' duality of approach is evaluated here from a different perspective, but this does not contradict our conclusions.

6. Polybius, *World History*, Book XXXIX, Chapter 8. Quoted from Arnold Toynbee, *Op. cit.*, p. 202. Cf. also R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 35–36.

Ahab's sin against Naboth brings about the horrible prophecy of Elijah on the king's downfall and his ignominious death (I Kings, Chapter 21). The final punishment of the kingdom of Israel and the justification for it are announced with absolute clarity:

And the kings of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria . . . Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded . . . (II Kings 18:11–12).

The downfall and exile of the kingdom of Judah at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar is explained in a similar way (II Chronicles, Chapter 36).

Indeed, it is not only the numerous moral interpretations of historical events that substantiate the Israelite perception of history. The formula is announced with great vigour in a general, a-priori manner with reference to Israel. The right conduct of the people will be amply rewarded:

And it shall be, because ye will hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the good will which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee, and bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land . . . in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee (Deuteronomy 7:12–13).

Sinful conduct will lead to severe collective punishment:

And it shall be, if thou forget altogether the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and bow before them, I testify to you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before thee, so shall ye perish . . . (Deuteronomy 8:19–20).⁷

The contrast between the Greek historical perception and the biblical one can be well illustrated by comparing the famous Melian dialogue in Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War* and the confrontation between Rabshakeh, the military commander of the Assyrian king, and the dignitaries representing Hezekiah, the king of Judah. The two situations are parallel. In the first instance, the powerful Athenian army, deployed against the island of Melos, faces the comparatively weak polis and demands its surrender. In the second case, Jerusalem faces the overwhelming force of the Assyrians, who also demand a surrender. In both cases, the weaker party is virtually doomed. In both instances, the powerful party insists on capitulation in the name of military preponderance. In the crystal clear words of the Athenians, "the strong do what they can, and the weak submit." In a situation of unequal forces the question of justice is dismissed by the Athenians as irrelevant.⁸ The

7. In the above two quotations the King James translation is modified to convey the meaning of the Hebrew text more precisely.

8. Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Sir R. W. Livingstone, (Oxford University Press, 1943), Book V, pp. 84–113. The quoted sentence is from p. 89.

Assyrian spokesman, in addressing the people sitting on the walls of Jerusalem, dismisses the possibility of salvation by God (who may be seen as representing moral principles) in the face of the overwhelming power of the Assyrian army:

Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, "The Lord will deliver us." Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hands of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? (Isaiah 36:18–20. Cf. also II Kings 18:32–35).

The ending of the respective confrontations is quite different. The Athenians subdue Melos by military force and deal brutally with their victims. In the case of Judah, following an ardent prayer by Hezekiah, God intervenes and smites the Assyrian army (possibly with plague) and makes the Assyrian king retreat, only to be killed by his conspiring sons.

The point in comparing the two episodes is not in the different outcomes of two similar situations—one following the anticipated evaluation, and the other unexpectedly providing an unusual, seemingly miraculous, outcome. The importance of the comparison is in presenting the different interpretations of the two situations. Thucydides exposes the separation between the realm of ethics and the world of international politics, *Realpolitik*, as it came to be called in more recent years. The two spheres are entirely separate in reality, much as we would wish to bring them into contact and enthrone right over might. The Bible rejects such separation, as is implicitly claimed by the Assyrians, and asserts divine control, which is tantamount to justice, over political events. There were events in the history of Israel in which salvation failed to occur, and there were events in the Peloponnesian War in which arrogance and ruthlessness were punished, but each of the respective historians chose to convey a confrontational dialogue of the enemies which would reveal his perception of history. The Greek historian expressed realism and despair, the Israelite—idealism and confidence.

The causal relationship between sin and punishment in history remained one of the foundations of the Judaic belief. It is clearly articulated in the prayers of the various holidays: "Because of our sins we are exiled from our country and moved far away from our land." Of course, this only echoes the repeated assertions of the prophets who, in this manner, justified Israel's and Judah's downfall and exile.

Interestingly, the rabbinical sages confront the question how to explain and justify the destruction of the Second Temple, a cataclysmic event which, unlike the destruction of the First Temple, was not preceded by the worship of idols and by other grave sins. Their answers, often conveyed in parables, vary, but concentrate on some deed of in-

iquity and, in one Talmudic passage, point out that unjustified hatred was the great sin that led to the terrible retribution.⁹

These answers may be less than satisfactory to the detached observer. But, then, the rabbis were intent on saving the belief in the just retribution in history. They wanted to assure themselves, and the people, that history is not a meaningless chaos or a confrontation between nations in which the stronger wins. The meaning of history had to be saved in order to save the basic optimism of Judaism, which assumes that the universe and human affairs are subject to God's ethically guided will. This belief—this illusion, a skeptic might say—was essential to the survival of Judaism. It provided hope to a suffering people and vindicated its adherence to its way-of-life.

The Greek historians, like the Greek dramatists, with their quest for truth, depicted reality the way it manifested itself, and their conclusion was bleak. The earth remained "without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep," to use the biblical phrasing, while man's life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," to put it in Hobbes' famous words. The Israelites and their Judaic successors chose to create a noble illusion of a morally ruled universe and history and, thus, saved their belief in a meaningful universe in which the just man and the righteous nation are not lost, and to which the righteous individual and just community can lend a hand.

9. See The Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 9. Cf. also *Gittin* 58.

The Baptized Rabbi of Rome: The Zolli Case

WALLACE P. SILLANPOA and ROBERT G. WEISBORD

IN DECEMBER OF 1939, ISRAEL ZOLLI, WHO HAD been a spiritual leader of Trieste's Jews for some twenty-eight years, officially assumed his duties as the Chief Rabbi of Rome's ancient Jewish community. In March of 1939, the Vatican Secretary of State and scion of a Roman aristocratic family, Eugenio Pacelli, was elected Pope in the briefest conclave in Church history: one day and three ballots. The new pontiff assumed the name of Pius XII. Six months after Pacelli's election, Adolph Hitler set off World War II by sending his army into Poland, Zolli's native land. Before the fighting ended in 1945, approximately six million Jews—including three million from Poland and more than fifteen hundred from Rome—were to lose their lives, martyrs to Hitler's insane racial theories. Both Zolli and Pacelli were to emerge from the Holocaust surrounded by controversy over their conduct during that darkest of eras in Jewish history.

Before having accepted the prestigious post offered him in Rome, Zolli visited the Eternal City where he encountered much cordiality and warmth among his future congregants. When writing to his future Roman flock in September, 1939, he exhorted his congregation to be faithful to God and to Israel, as well as to their beloved homeland, Italy.¹ Five and a half years later those words would ring hollow, for, in February of 1945, Israel Zolli shocked his co-religionists in Rome and throughout the Jewish world by converting to Catholicism. He chose as his baptismal name, Eugenio, in honor of the reigning Pope.

Almost half a century after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, Zolli—who died in 1956—can still provoke anger and/or embarrassment. As the major rabbinical *meshumad* (voluntary apostate) in modern history, he is still anathema to Rome's Jewish community. When visitors to the Italian capital broach the subject of Zolli—Roman Jews almost never do—he is often referred to as *innominabile* (unmentionable). Residents of the old ghetto, which harks back to the sixteenth century, emotionally describe him with coarse epithets, even to this very day.

1. Tempio Maggiore, Rome, Modern Archives, Israel Zolli File, Message from Zolli in Trieste, 13 September 1939.

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Zolli's is a saga which a then contemporary rabbi labelled "one of the strangest stories of modern Jewish life . . . a unique event in Jewish history."² Over the centuries, Jews, even rabbis, had converted to Roman Catholicism.³ Nevertheless, the esteemed historian, Cecil Roth, could not recall, in 1945, when he had been more profoundly distressed, for here was no

catchpenny, titular Synagogal dignitary, . . . but the spiritual head of the oldest Jewish community of Europe who has disgraced the superb tradition of this office and proved false to his flock at their hour of greatest need.⁴

Zolli, it must be remembered, was a Biblical scholar of note as well as a Chief Rabbi.

Because of its highly sensitive nature, Zolli's story has never been adequately told and, in general, the Zolli affair has been treated by academics as a "hot potato." Back in 1945, his conversion was widely discussed in Jewish circles, but, nowadays, most Jews, including many who are knowledgeable about twentieth-century Jewish history, do not even recognize Zolli's name. In the Catholic world, the situation is more or less the same. Zolli and his tale of tribulations deserve better. More importantly, consideration of Zolli's career, especially in relation to events that occurred during the critical years of 1943 to 1945, can aid those who would understand the horrors of Nazism in Italy. It can also serve to illuminate Catholic-Jewish relations in general, and Vatican-Jewish relations in particular during the Holocaust. Needless to say, there is little consensus among historians on these thorny issues.

Almost from the beginning of his tenure as Chief Rabbi of Rome, there was tension between Zolli and members of the *giunta*, or Jewish council. Acrimony also persisted in his relationship with Ugo Foa, the President of the Jewish Community.⁵ The difficulties, however, were not only with the community's leaders and little time passed before rapport between Zolli and most of his congregants was extremely poor. In general, he was considered to be cold, distant, reserved, aloof and unapproachable. Many in the community have described him as a not particularly sympathetic figure: as a person who had great difficulty communicating with his people, adults and children alike. In Trieste it had been the same. Zolli had conceded that there was disappointment when

2. Meyer Berman Papers, Letter from Rabbi Meyer Berman to Judith Berman, 18 February 1945.

3. Some rabbinical converts, notably Alfonso de Burgos and Paolo de Santa Maria in 14th- and 15th-Century Spain, competed to derogate Jews after their conversions. Visitors to the church of S. Andrea della Valle in Rome will find in the church's vestibule a painting of San Giuseppe M. Tomasi, a 17th-Century Sicilian, embracing Rabbi Mose DeCave, a convert to Catholicism.

4. *Jewish Chronicle*. 23 February 1945.

5. Zolli File; Zolli to Ugo Foa, 30 April 1942; Anselmo Colombo to Foa, 12 June 1942.

he was appointed Chief Rabbi in that city for “I know how to love better than how to make myself loved.”⁶

Although Zolli the scholar was always respected, Zolli the man and rabbi was not. Rabbi Jacob Hochman, an American army chaplain who first met him in the summer of 1944, has commented that “whatever warm and genuine feeling there was in him was for books and their scientific study.” Hochman found him “cold and uninspiring.”⁷ In a conversation with Hochman and his British counterpart, Rabbi Meyer Berman, Zolli’s younger daughter, Miriam, asserted that her father never belonged in a synagogue as a rabbi. Instead, his proper place was with books inside an academic hall. From the very first, Hochman was taken aback by Zolli’s deprecation of the supposedly ignorant, rude masses that constituted the bulk of his community. His learning was wasted on them and, furthermore, they showed him bad manners. There seems little doubt that, on the whole, Zolli saw his congregation as uncultured and, consequently, undeserving of an illustrious scholar such as himself. It is reported that in October, 1942 he told a plenary meeting of the Jewish council: “I consider it an honor for the community of Rome to have me as Chief Rabbi and I do not consider it an honor for me to be Chief Rabbi of the community.”⁸

In the aftermath of Zolli’s conversion, the community conducted an investigation into his performance as Chief Rabbi. Testimony was taken from sundry individuals who had known him, worked for or with him, or had studied under him at the rabbinical college.⁹ Much of the sharpest criticism came from former rabbinical students. Several faulted his deportment during religious services, funerals and circumcisions. They claimed that during worship he slept, read profane, i.e., non-religious books, chatted, sucked hard candies or cleaned his glasses with prayer shawls when he should have been saying his prayers. They testified that he tried to accelerate the praying, or that he departed before the services were actually finished. Furthermore, they rebuked Zolli for

6. Eugenio Zolli, *Before the Dawn* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), p. 63.

7. Hochman statement about Zolli’s conversion (undated). This statement was made available to the authors by Mary Hochman, Rabbi Hochman’s daughter. The Polish-born Hochman, a graduate of New York’s Jewish Theological Seminary, had served as chaplain in the American army for two and a half years in Algeria and Tunisia before assignment to Rome. Documentary evidence, especially that perused in the Synagogue files in Trieste, confirms the critical assessment of Zolli that is offered in most interviews with Jews who had known him.

8. Zolli file, statement by Ugo Foa, 12 October 1945.

9. Ibid. Testimony by Aldo Bises, 7 July 1945; Settimo Di Castro, 12 July 1945; Angelo Sonnino, 12 July 1945; Sergio Sierra, 15 July 1945; Luigi Tagliacozzo, 15 July 1945; Gino Moscati, 25 July 1945; Alfredo Ravenna, 25 July 1945; Marco Vivanti, 25 July 1945; Cesare Vivanti, 26 July 1945; Nello Pavoncello, 5 August 1945; Mario Sed, 5 August 1945; Cesare Tagliacozzo, 5 August 1945.

deriding a number of Judaic traditions as superstitions. One former student remembered that Zolli called the *mezuzah* a pagan symbol and disparaged the *shofar* as a “little trumpet” that was breaking his ear-drums.¹⁰

Laxity in religious observance remains a recurring theme in the indictments. It was said that Zolli commemorated the dead during prohibited periods and allowed women in that area of the temple reserved for men. He was inclined to offer rational explanations for “miracles” that are recounted in the Old Testament, e.g., the parting of the Red Sea when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Some of his beliefs and practices were probably closer to those which we today associate with Reform Judaism, a movement which did not, *per se*, exist in Italy.

During the afore-mentioned inquest of 1945, Cesare Tagliacozzo testified that Zolli made several speeches in which he virtually exhorted his students to abandon the rabbinical profession, arguing that it offered no one satisfaction since rabbis were not held in great esteem.¹¹ He was also accused of publicly demeaning rabbinical students, one of whom, Angelo Sonnino, observed that Zolli jokingly referred to future rabbis and cantors as “cardinals,” and he nicknamed each of them with the cognomen of a famous prince of the Catholic Church.¹² Indeed, the full brunt of Zolli’s strange ironic humor becomes evident in one reported incident. Rabbi David Panzieri testifies that, shortly after the liberation of Rome, he engaged Zolli in conversation in front of the holy ark where the books of the law are kept and, at one point, the rabbi cried out, “My Jesus, save me,” certainly an odd choice of exhortation.¹³

Nevertheless, by June 1944, when the Nazis had fled before the advancing Allied armies, the atmosphere in Jewish Rome was permeated with bitterness and recrimination. Zolli had by now become *persona non grata*, mainly because of what he had done, or failed to do, during the Nazi occupation. In fact, on April 2, 1944, the Council had dismissed him as Chief Rabbi of Rome.

From the perspective of Ugo Foa and many other Roman Jews, Zolli’s actions had been completely reprehensible during the months of Nazi rule. The Chief Rabbi had deserted his post and had become unreachable even before the Nazi threat had become clearly delineated. As of September 9, 1943,—the very day when the Germans took Rome,

10. Ibid., Sonnino testimony, 12 July 1945; DiCastro testimony, 12 July 1945; and Eliseo testimony, 26 July 1945.

11. Ibid., Cesare Tagliacozzo testimony, 5 August 1945.

12. Ibid., Sonnino testimony, 12 July 1945.

13. Ibid., Sergio Sierra testimony, 15 July 1945 and Cesare Eliseo testimony, 26 July 1945.

following the Italian surrender to the Allies—Foa wrote that Zolli was not to be found.¹⁴ Not only had he abandoned the faithful in their hour of danger, but he had allegedly failed to safeguard the sacred objects and cultural treasures of the library and college. Foa's scathing bill of particulars includes the serious charge that Zolli had been concerned only with his personal safety and had thus contributed to the disorientation, confusion and dismay of his brethren. Foa acknowledged that, though Zolli was in jeopardy, so, too, were others who had not vanished. He later cited as a case in point the tragic fate of Commendatore Giuseppe Pardo Roques, former President of the Jewish community in Pisa. Roques did not hide and he remained unmolested by the Nazis until August, 1944, when he was murdered by the S.S.¹⁵ Foa implied that it was preferable for Jewish communal leaders to die rather than simply to disappear. Zolli was to contend, however, that he felt no such obligation to forfeit his life. To Herbert L. Matthews of the *New York Times* he quoted an old Roman proverb: "First live, then worship God."¹⁶ Only the living could praise God, as the proverb and a Biblical psalm point out. In this connection, it is noteworthy that, during the entire time when Rome was under the Nazi jackboot, Rabbi David Panzieri officiated alone at clandestine religious services held at the "Tempietto," the little temple then situated on the Tiber Island. Undaunted by the Nazi menace, Rabbi Panzieri walked openly through the streets of the ghetto.

Even when Zolli did emerge from hiding following the liberation of Rome, he showed no interest in the faithful or the temple, according to Foa. He did not even inquire about the well-being of his congregants. Instead, he asked only for money to meet his personal needs. Specifically, according to Foa, Zolli demanded stipends for the period when he had been underground. The Council, however, considered Zolli's action to be a defection and a dereliction of duty and no funds were forthcoming.¹⁷

Zolli defended his conduct by saying that, as a Polish Jew, he understood the Nazi menace better than did the Roman Jewish leadership, who maintained that ties to high-ranking Italian Fascists could protect them. Indeed, it is probably true that Italian Jews were psychologically unprepared for the catastrophe about to befall them. Because of pervasive assimilation—Jews were virtually indistinguishable

14. La Comunità Israelitica di Roma. *Ottobre 1943: Cronaca di un'infamia* (Roma, 1961), p. 31. It is noteworthy that Zolli's conduct was later compared with that of Dante Almansì who concealed himself after deportations began but who remained in touch with those helping Jews with food, money, ration cards, and counsel. See: *Israel*. (Roma) 13 January 1949.

15. Statement by Ugo Foa, 12 October 1945; also, Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust—Persecution, Rescue and Survival* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987) p. 198.

16. *New York Times*, July 9, 1944.

17. Statement by Ugo Foa, 12 October 1945.

from Italian Catholics in language, dress, and manners—they found it difficult to conceive of themselves as second-class citizens. After all, there had been Jews in Italy before Christianity and, prior to 1938, when Mussolini implemented anti-Semitic racial legislation, discrimination against Jews had been minimal, not at all comparable to that which raged in Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To most Italian Jews, genocide was unimaginable.

In Trieste, during the 1930s, Zolli had met Jewish refugees from Germany who had impressed upon him the reality of the Nazi peril and he came to appreciate the possibility that the Jews of Rome would likely experience a bloodbath.¹⁸ His behavior was determined, at least in part, by his awareness of the fate that had befallen other rabbis. He knew that the Chief Rabbi of Copenhagen had been deported, as had the Chief Rabbi of Florence. He was aware that Milan's Chief Rabbi had been forced to seek refuge in Switzerland, while Genoa's spiritual leader, Rabbi Riccardo Pacifici, had been beaten, tortured, and eventually sent to his death at Auschwitz.¹⁹ Zolli's version of the events that unfolded in the autumn of 1943 is as follows: because he truly understood the Nazi danger, he recommended the total suppression of public Jewish functions, the closing of administrative offices, the elimination of donor lists, the dispersion of his co-religionists, the distribution of financial help to those most in need, and the reduction of the community treasure to a shadow operation. Those proposals were rejected, however, by the lay Jewish leadership, Ugo Foa and Dante Almansì, President of the Union of Italian Jewish communities.²⁰ With Rome under the dreaded swastika, Zolli compared himself to Christ on the cross between two thieves: on the one side were the German persecutors and on the other the Fascist Jewish leadership.

On September 9, Zolli delivered a speech in the Spanish temple where he tried to make clear the gravity of the situation, but his words fell on deaf ears. That was his last public appearance for about ten months. He later insisted that his continued public presence would have only spread an illusory sense of tranquility.

Seeking advice, an understandably anxious Zolli turned to the Italian police, who told him to make himself scarce since they could not guarantee his safety. On that occasion, one policeman told him that, an hour after the Nazis marched into Prague, they had killed the Czecho-

18. Zolli, *Before the Dawn*, p. 142.

19. Emanuele Pacifici (ed.), *Commemorazione di Riccardo Pacifici-Rabbino Capo di Genova, vittima delle persecuzioni naziste* (Genova: 1984) and Emanuele Pacifici, Personal interview, 21 May 1987. Emanuele Pacifici, son of the murdered Chief Rabbi, was himself almost mortally wounded in an attack at the Tempio Maggiore that was carried out by Arab terrorists in 1982.

20. Zolli file, statement by Israel Zolli, 21 June 1944. The statement was actually a letter; however, it is not clear if the recipient of the letter was Foa.

slovakian capital's Chief Rabbi. Zolli claimed that several Jewish community leaders and individuals who were in touch with anti-Nazi partisans reproached him for remaining visible. Non-Jews did likewise. After all, the Gestapo was looking for him and there was a price on his head. In early October, Zolli's derelict apartment was plundered by two Nazi officers and papers and books were impounded.²¹ Hence, Zolli's counsel to the threatened Roman Jews was to scatter, to leave Rome, or to find sanctuary in a convent or monastery.²²

Zolli himself hid briefly in the homes of Jewish friends, but the crucial question is whether he was really incommunicado during that time. To counter Foa's accusations that he was unreachable, Zolli, in his autobiography, reprinted a letter from Ruggero DiSegni whom he described as a friend of Foa's. DiSegni wrote that, at Zolli's request, he notified the community that direct contact with the Chief Rabbi could be made by telephone to the home of Giorgio Fiorentino, a young Jewish lawyer and Zolli supporter.²³ Dr. Luigi Tagliacozzo, another Roman Jew, also testified that, shortly after the Germans invaded Rome, a dishevelled Zolli arrived at his doorstep. It was agreed that the Chief Rabbi would go to the home of a Dr. Angelo Anav, where he subsequently remained for about fifteen days. Zolli authorized Tagliacozzo to communicate his whereabouts confidentially to Almansi. Tagliacozzo complied.²⁴ Evidently, Zolli concluded that refuge in the homes of fellow Jews was fraught with danger, so he soon relocated to the home of sympathetic Catholics, Amadeo Pierantoni and his family, who were engaged in anti-Nazi subversive activities: they stored arms and explosives on their premises and prepared flyers urging Italian Fascists and German military personnel to desert. To protect his benefactors, Zolli had to give his word of honor not to let anyone know of his whereabouts.²⁵

Zolli maintained that, even then, he labored to aid his beleaguered brethren, citing, for example, his role in the harrowing story of the fifty kilograms of gold which the Nazis extorted from the terrorized and helpless Jews of Rome in September, 1943. What are the facts about his part in this much misinterpreted incident?

The story of the 1943 Nazi extortion of Jewish gold is by now well known, having been told and depicted in numerous studies on the Italian Holocaust.²⁶ In brief, on September 26, 1943, the Nazi Command

21. Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 358.

22. Zolli, *Before the Dawn*, p. 148.

23. Ibid., p. 205.

24. Luigi Tagliacozzo Testimony, 15 July 1945.

25. Zolli statement, 21 June 1944.

26. See, especially: Robert Katz, *Black Sabbath: A Journey through a Crime Against Humanity* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969); and Giacomo Debenedetti, *16 ottobre 1943 otto ebrei* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1978).

alerted leaders of Rome's Jewish community that, unless they turned over fifty kilograms of gold to the Reich within two days, the heads of two hundred Jewish families would be deported. As word of the ransom demand spread throughout the ghetto and the city, lines of mostly poor Jews gathered at a collection site set up within the ghetto to donate their few precious gold objects. In addition to the Jewish contributors, a number of non-Jewish donors, including some Catholic clergy, also came forth to help in meeting the Nazi demand. Though the fifty kilograms (and more) were collected and the German hunger for gold was appeased, the Nazi thirst for Jewish blood was not quenched by the ransom. Less than one month after the extortion, Nazi troops surrounded the ghetto, rounded up more than one thousand of its inhabitants—including children and the infirm—and sent them to their death in the extermination factories of Poland.

Years after these tragic events, Zolli claimed that he had donated his gold chain and five thousand lire to the September, 1943 collection.²⁷ He also stated that, during the critical hours of that September, he had emerged from hiding and, at great personal risk, had hurried to the Vatican to seek the Pope's assistance in meeting the imposed quota of gold. According to his 1954 autobiographical account, Zolli—allegedly accompanied by Giorgio Fiorentino—pretended to be an engineer coming to inspect certain Vatican walls. In still another version of the same story, Zolli claims he was accompanied by a Catholic friend as well.²⁸ At the time that he took it upon himself to visit the Vatican, Zolli had been told that the Jews had been able to raise only thirty-five kilograms of the required total. Consequently, an additional fifteen kilograms were needed to satisfy the Nazi demand and forestall a catastrophe.

When he reached the Vatican, Zolli went to see Bernardino Nogara, the lay architect who served as head of the Treasury, and from there he went to the office of Luigi Cardinal Maglione, the Vatican Secretary of State, where he pleaded for help and offered himself as surety. "Since I am poor," he promised, "the Hebrews of the whole world will contribute to pay the debt."²⁹

In his own account, Giorgio Fiorentino stated that he accompanied Zolli only as far as the main door of the Vatican's offices, where Zolli left him and went to speak to Nogara who then went to inform Pius XII. Zolli subsequently reported to Fiorentino that they had received papal authorization for a loan of the fifteen kilograms, a loan which

27. Zolli, *Before the Dawn*, p. 160. In a declaration printed in the autobiography, Miriam Zolli says that she turned over "twelve grams of gold and the sum of five-thousand lire" as a personal offering from her father (pp. 207–208).

28. The autobiographical narrative makes no mention of the Catholic friend, but in a 1950 interview he is referred to by Zolli. See the Israeli newspaper, *Ma'ariv*, 9 June 1950.

29. Zolli, *Before the Dawn*, p. 206.

was to be paid four years after the cessation of all hostilities.³⁰ Purportedly, Zolli drew up a receipt and sent a letter to Foa, apprising him of the details of the loan and offering himself as the first hostage in case of a roundup.

In the end, however, the collection in the ghetto exceeded fifty kilograms and it proved unnecessary for the Jews to borrow anything at all from the Vatican. According to a document published by the Holy See itself, Zolli returned on September 28 to advise Nogara that the loan was not needed. Wishing perhaps to magnify the Church's role in the affair, Nogara, in turn, wrote to Cardinal Maglione that the fifteen kilograms had been obtained from "Catholic communities"³¹ which he did not identify. Those "communities" have never been identified.

Confusion has enveloped this episode of the gold ever since 1943. Captain Maurice Neufeld of the U.S. Army, for instance, labored under the misconception that the Jews in Rome would have been killed "if it hadn't been for gold sent by the Pope."³² The inaccurate assertion that the Papacy actually contributed fifteen kilograms is still being made by some writers who are eager to prove the Vatican's philo-Semitism during the Holocaust.³³ It has also become part of the folklore surrounding the Vatican's relationship with Rome's Jews during the Nazi occupation. Simply stated, it is certainly disingenuous to imply that the Vatican gold was donated without expectation of payment when it was a *loan*, not a gift that was approved. Furthermore, it is less than candid to state, as did Father Robert Leiber, a German Jesuit and confidant of the Pope, that Pius XII "spontaneously" offered to make up the deficit for the Jews.³⁴ The gold was solicited by Zolli and, also, independently, by Renzo

30. Zolli file, Giorgio Fiorentino, 16 July 1945. Fiorentino's declaration, published in the appendix to Zolli's autobiography, states different terms for the Vatican loan. In the 1954 account Fiorentino wrote of a loan of "fifteen kilograms of gold *to be returned without limit of time* in equivalent gold or currency, on the simple guarantee of a receipt signed by the Head Rabbi and by the President of the Israelite Community of Rome" [emphasis ours]. See pp. 206–207 in Zolli, *Before the Dawn*.

31. Letter from Nogara to Cardinal Maglione, 29 September 1943 in *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975). Vol. 9, p. 494.

32. Letter from Maurice Neufeld to Hinda Neufeld, 12 July 1944 in *Library of Congress*. Maurice Neufeld Papers, Container 5.

33. Anthony Rhodes, *The Vatican in the Age of Dictators, 1922–1945* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), p. 341. The Zolli entry in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIV, p. 1128 also states that the Vatican provided financial assistance to meet the German demand, as does Joseph L. Lichten, "Pius XII and the Jews," *The Catholic Mind*. Vol. 57, No. 1142 (March–April 1959): 161.

34. R. Leiber. "Pio XII e gli ebrei di Roma 1943–1944," *La Civiltà cattolica*, 112, Vol. 1 (4 marzo 1961): 450. The Leiber article was simultaneously published in German in *Stimmen der Zeit*. Ordained in 1917, Leiber became a professor of ecclesiastical history at the Pontifical Gregorian University and served for many years as Pacelli's secretary.

Levi, President of Delasem,³⁵ in conjunction with Dr. Adriano Ascarelli, both of whom were acting for the Jewish community. They approached a Padre Borsarelli, Vice Prior of the Convent of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who made contact with the Curia about the Jews' desperate need for a loan. Father Borsarelli likewise received an affirmative reply.³⁶

It is, of course, inconceivable that Vatican authorities were not aware of the ultimatum issued by the Nazis to the Jews of Rome. All of Rome knew, as the presence of non-Jews at the collection site indicates. The drama of the extortion was enacted virtually on the Pope's doorstep. Yet His Holiness took no initiative in seeking out Jewish leaders to proffer succor. The Jews went to him. For the Holy See, this was hardly its finest display of Christian charity.

Roman Jews have often expressed skepticism about Zolli's putative role in the gold matter.³⁷ After the Nazi occupation, Ugo Foa, Zolli's *bête noire*, denied that he had ever received a note from the Chief Rabbi assuring the community of the Vatican's willingness to lend fifteen kilograms. Writing in July, 1944, Foa would only admit that the Rabbi's daughter, Miriam, had orally conveyed a vague promise of eventual help from the papacy. Foa further emphatically denied that he had ever received an oral or a written communication from Zolli declaring his readiness to offer himself as a hostage. Foa contends also that, during the entire period of the Nazi persecution, he had received only one handwritten communication from the rabbi—a request for money for himself in February, 1944.³⁸

But the preponderance of evidence—notably the testimony of Giorgio Fiorentino and the published Vatican document previously cited—would seem to support Zolli on the gold ransom. What is more, an undated document in the Zolli file of the Rome synagogue concedes that Zolli had consulted Nogara and had received a guarantee from the chief of the Vatican Treasury that a loan of fifteen kilograms would be put at the Jews' disposal.

35. Delasem stood for: Delegazione Assistenza Emigranti Ebrei. It was a Jewish agency which aided refugees.

36. Letter from Lelio Vittorio Valobra to Father Robert Leiber (April, 1961) objecting to various inaccuracies in Leiber's account. This letter was made available to the authors by the Jesuit historian, Father Robert Graham. Based on an interview with Renzo Levi, Robert Katz, in his *Black Sabbath—A Journey Through a Crime Against Humanity* p. 87, stated that Pius XII had personally authorized a loan with terms similar to those cited by Giorgio Fiorentino. Repayment could be made in installments with the date for the completion of payments left open. See: *Black Sabbath*. p. 87, footnote 35.

37. A 1968 piece published in a Roman-Jewish periodical completely ignores Zolli's approach to the Vatican for gold. See: Ariel Toaff, "Eugenio Zolli et l'oro di Roma," *Shalom*, Vol. 2, No. 9 (October 1968): 3–4.

38. Zolli file, Letter from Ugo Foa to Israel Zolli, 4 July 1944.

The well-known and final act in the Roman Jewish tragedy was played out on October 16, 1943, when the Nazis besieged the ghetto and rounded up Jews who were quickly dispatched to Auschwitz. One thousand and forty-one of them never returned. In the end, the Nazi Command got both the Jews and their gold. Moreover, the Vatican's silence enshrouding the October 16 roundup was deafening.³⁹

On June 4, 1944, wildly cheering crowds greeted Lieutenant Mark W. Clark and the Allied 5th Army when they entered the Eternal City as conquering liberators. For war-weary Romans, the Nazi scourge had ended. Rome's monuments were intact and its beauty unimpaired, but its economy was shattered and much of its population had been badly traumatized. The formidable task of ruling over a free but prostrate Roman population fell to a Harvard-educated attorney, Charles Poletti, son of an Italian-American granite cutter. Poletti, who had studied in Rome in 1924–1925, was put in charge of the Lazio-Umbria region by the Allied Military Government.

When Poletti assumed his duties, Roman life, in general, was austere and conditions for the factionalized Jewish population were even worse. Large segments of the Jewish community—those who had survived—were impoverished; hunger was rampant. To make matters worse, the local Jewish leadership was in disarray and involved in acrimonious squabbling. As Captain Maurice Neufeld, Poletti's aide and close friend, succinctly summarized, "The Jewish community is in a mess." Many of the "big shots" were Fascists who showed indifference towards the community⁴⁰ and personal gossip of a malicious nature abounded. Arthur C. Greenleigh, the Joint Distribution Committee director for Italy, called the Jewish community "a real headache at present with no recognized leadership and the worst factionalism possible."⁴¹

Despite opposition from the community, and to fill the void in spiritual leadership, Colonel Poletti restored Zolli to the rabbinical office

39. John F. Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939–1943* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1980), p. 192. In 1948, Herbert Kappler, the S.S. Chieftain in Rome, was tried, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for the 1944 Ardetine Caves massacre of three-hundred and thirty-five Romans (including seventy-one Jews) in retaliation for the killing by Italian partisans of some thirty-three German soldiers. Largely on the testimony of Ugo Foa, he was sentenced to an additional fifteen years on a charge related to the gold extortion.

In August, 1977, Kappler, seriously ill with cancer, was spirited out of a Rome military hospital and transported to West Germany. Despite public outcry and charges of complicity among certain high-ranking State and military circles, Italy's request for extradition was rejected and Kappler died in Germany the following year.

40. Neufeld Papers, Container 5, Letter from Maurice Neufeld to Hinda Neufeld, 10 September 1944.

41. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Papers, File 716, Letter from Arthur Greenleigh, 20 August 1944. It is not clear to whom Greenleigh was writing.

from which he had been dismissed by the *giunta* that spring. Having heard that the Chief Rabbi was ailing, Poletti wrote to him on June 30 expressing his hopes for a swift recovery that would enable Zolli to resume his activities in full. It was Poletti's desire that "the direction of all affairs inherent to the rabbinical office as well as the task of presiding over the solemn religious functions should be entrusted to the expert and reliable hands of the religious leader himself."⁴² At that juncture, Poletti had not yet met Zolli. He did, soon thereafter, and was favorably impressed. In late August, while reviewing the Allies' accomplishments in Rome, Poletti remarked that "one of the most thrilling and satisfying experiences" as regional commissioner had been his work with Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli.⁴³

At that time Captain Neufeld shared his superior's flattering assessment of Zolli, whom he characterized as "kindly and tolerant"⁴⁴ and, essentially, he accepted Zolli's version of the difficulties with a pro-Fascist leadership in the Jewish community. In the autumn of 1944, Rabbis Hochman and Berman were also favorably disposed toward Zolli, but subsequent events would require a drastic re-assessment of the Chief Rabbi.

Ugo Foa was removed by Poletti because he was "*persona grata* with important Fascist officials" and because of his open dealing with the S.S. in Rome. In justifying his removal of Foa, Poletti granted that the former President of the Jewish Community might have acted in good faith, "believing that such maneuvering with Fascists and Nazis would save the community." The consequences for the community had, nevertheless, been disastrous⁴⁵ and Poletti thought it best to put new faces into office.

One such new face belonged to Giuseppe Nathan, an affluent and respected banker whose father, Ernesto, had been the first Jew to be elected Mayor of Rome.⁴⁶ Nathan succeeded Dante Almansi, who had been forced out as President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, a position which he had held since November, 1939. Rightly or wrongly, the Allied Military Government purged Almansi because of his Fascist past. Although Poletti—together with some who have written about Italian Jews under Mussolini—regarded Almansi as a dyed-in-

42. Neufeld Papers, Container 21, Letter from Col. Poletti to Chief Rabbi Zolli, 30 June 1944.

43. Ibid. Remarks by Col. Poletti made at a Regional Commissioners' Conference, 22 August 1944.

44. Ibid., Container 5, Letter from Maurice Neufeld to Hinda Neufeld, 12 July 1944.

45. Ibid., Container 21, Memo from Col. Poletti to Lieut. Carl E. Fehr, Security Division, Allied Commission, Headquarters, 24 November 1944.

46. Zuccoti, *The Italians and the Holocaust*, pp. xiii–xv.

the-wool Fascist, he has had many defenders within the Roman Jewish community.⁴⁷

Nathan had never been an observant Jew, nor was he involved in the community's seemingly endless internal quarrels. Although his health was poor, due, in part, to months that he had spent in the infamous Regina Coeli prison, he accepted the post as an obligation to his co-religionists. As he observed in 1946, "I felt myself bound in a special way after the abominable persecutions of which we were the victims."⁴⁸

Another new face belonged to Silvio Ottolenghi, a well-known attorney whom Poletti appointed extraordinary commissioner of the Jewish community of Rome. Ottolenghi, also, had not previously been active in Jewish communal affairs and his task was to serve as an intermediary between the Allied military government and the community. From the day of his appointment, many Roman Jews believed that Ottolenghi should have resigned rather than accept the Allies' order to restore Zolli to office. Had Ottolenghi done so, Poletti et al. would have understood that the order ran contrary to the sentiments and best interests of the community. But, because Ottolenghi did not resign, the initial suspicion persisted that he had been selected by Zolli himself. Indeed, the suspicion deepened after July 20, 1944, when Ottolenghi made a passionate defense of Zolli, casting the rabbi in the light of martyr and hero.⁴⁹

The suspicion was wholly justified. Both Colonel Poletti and Captain Neufeld explicitly stated that they had chosen Ottolenghi at Zolli's suggestion, but not before consulting a number of people, Jews and Gentiles alike. Writing to his wife in New York City, Neufeld said that, no matter whom the Allies selected, that person would be the target of

47. Both Almansi and Foa were praised by Sergio Piperno and Giorgio Sierra for their dignity and courage during the Nazi era. (See: *Shalom*, [Roma] [July–August 1973], pp. 20–21). For several years of defense of Almansi has been spearheaded by his son, Dr. Renato J. Almansi, a physician who has long resided in New York City. Dr. Almansi has prepared an unpublished manuscript, "Dante Almansi, President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, November 13, 1939 to October 1, 1944" (1971) which offers details about his father's career and a rebuttal to charges levelled against the elder Almansi by Robert Katz and others.

Dante Almansi's daughter, Dr. Elena Nunberg, has described her father as essentially non-political, a bureaucrat who never really supported Fascism but, rather, had to join the party for pragmatic reasons (Personal interview, Rome, 28 May 1987). After his death in 1949, Dante Almansi was eulogized in the Roman Jewish periodical, *Israel* (13 January 1949). Additional praise may be found in Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1961), pp. 478–485.

48. AJDC Files, Summary of Giuseppe Nathan report, 27 March 1946 at the Convention of the Union of Jewish Communities of Italy, Rome.

49. Zolli File, Observations of Signor Maggior, 25 March 1945. Of course, it was Poletti and Neufeld as well as Berman and Hochman—not Ottolenghi—who insisted on Zolli's retention as Chief Rabbi. See: Neufeld Papers, Container 5, Letter from Maurice Neufeld to Hinda Neufeld, 8 April 1945.

sniping.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the final choice was a curious one in that Ottolenghi was known to be pro-Fascist and the military government, after all, had fired Foa and Almansì on the very grounds that they both had harbored Fascist pasts and sympathies. Moreover, in August of 1944, Greenleigh bluntly asserted that Ottolenghi was “once an ardent apologist for the fascists”⁵¹ and Neufeld knew, specifically, that he had been one of the signers of the May, 1937 “Manifesto of Riforma” which declared that Italian Jews were, first and foremost, Italians who rejected Zionism, Communism, Freemasonry and other international ideologies and loyalties.⁵²

During all of this time, Captain Neufeld and Rabbis Hochman and Berman assisted Zolli and his impoverished family in the post-liberation period, sometimes drawing from their own resources. Knowledge of the Zolli affair has been deepened by the recent discovery of relevant letters and papers of the two chaplains⁵³ who, along with other chaplains, gave the Zollis money and gifts. Hardly a week passed, Berman wrote, without a food parcel being sent to the Chief Rabbi,⁵⁴ Another American chaplain, Rabbi Aaron Paperman, recalls being importuned by Zolli for cigarettes.⁵⁵ Almost from the day when the military government took over, Zolli bombarded the Allied Command with requests. He was at their premises almost every day and, according to Neufeld, “pestered the hell out of me.”⁵⁶ In the fall of 1944, it seemed that Zolli was reaching the end of his tether, emotionally even more so than financially.

By this time, Zolli was in his mid-sixties: fatigued, ill and embittered. Rabbi Berman painted the following personality portrait:

He was sour and uncongenial. At times he gave one the impression of much greater age and little vitality and yet at times he appeared the cool calculating self-centered and astute schemer. He was mentally and physically tired and broken.⁵⁷

Unpopular with his constituents and, consequently, insecure about

50. Ibid., Letter from Maurice Neufeld to Hinda Neufeld, 10 September 1944.

51. AJDC, Arthur Greenleigh letter, 20 August 1944.

52. Neufeld Papers, Container 5, Letter from Maurice Neufeld to Hinda Neufeld, 10 September 1944.

53. While in North Africa and Italy, Rabbi Meyer Berman corresponded regularly with his wife, Judith, in London. Those letters are in the possession of Mrs. Berman, his widow, who has made them available to the authors. Rabbi Hochman's papers, while fewer in number, have been shown to the authors by his daughter, Mary Hochman, a medical student at the University of Pennsylvania.

54. Berman Papers, Letter from Rabbi Berman to Judith Berman, 20 March 1945.

55. Rabbi Aaron Paperman, telephone interview, 23 June 1987. A Major in the U.S. Army, Rabbi Paperman attended the yeshiva in Telshe, Lithuania and became a Talmudic scholar of note. He received a Bronze Star for his military service in Europe.

56. Maurice Neufeld, telephone interview, 2 March 1987.

57. Berman Papers, Letter from Rabbi to Judith Berman, 20 March 1945.

his pulpit despite the backing of the Allied Military Government. Zolli sought lifetime tenure in his rabbinical position. Using his friends in the Jewish world, he tried to influence the new Italian government. In September, 1944, Joseph H. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of London, wrote to Ivanoe Bonomi, the Italian Prime Minister, about conditions among Roman Jews. Cognizant of the divisions within the Jewish community, Hertz sided with Zolli, whom he knew personally to be an illustrious teacher and a man of great culture and he expressed the opinion that it would be tragic if Zolli's leadership were to become a victim of injustice.⁵⁸

While fighting to retain his rabbinical post, Zolli sought, simultaneously, an appointment at the University of Rome. In November and December of 1944 and, again, in January, 1945, his academic prospects brightened somewhat even as his rabbinical fortunes declined. He was considered for a chair in epigraphy and Semitic antiquities and the Italian government was disposed to back his candidacy, although documents in the Italian State Archives indicate that some officials in the Interior Ministry had ulterior motives. They were distressed that other nations were ahead of Italy in developing commercial links with Palestine. A November, 1944, memorandum noted that Zolli had many important contacts and could be useful in fostering business connections between Italy and Palestine.⁵⁹ The Prime Minister's office also wanted Zolli to teach modern Hebrew to those preparing for diplomatic and consular careers, and to do so without compensation.⁶⁰

As the new year approached, Zolli must have seen himself as increasingly isolated from the Jews of Rome. In failing health, he faced a bleak future, at least as rabbi, and in December, 1944, he told Ottolenghi confidentially that he wanted to retire for health reasons.⁶¹

In all likelihood, Ottolenghi secretly welcomed Zolli's decision to step down as Chief Rabbi. The extraordinary commissioner had long labored in vain to reconcile the strong desire of many Roman Jews to recall ex-Chief Rabbi David Prato from Palestine with his own concern for providing Zolli with a livelihood. Ottolenghi's compromise solution was to appoint Zolli director of Rome's Rabbinical College and, therefore, on January 26 he honored Zolli's request for retirement as spiritual leader effective February 1. Simultaneously, Giuseppe Nathan de-

58. Italian State Archives, Interior Ministry, Cabinet 44-46, Envelope 56, Letter from Chief Rabbi Hertz to Prime Minister Ivanoe Bonomi, 22 September 1944. Neufeld claimed credit for getting Bonomi to recognize Zolli's citizenship and his tenure as Chief Rabbi. Letter from Maurice Neufeld to Hinda Neufeld, 15 February 1945.

59. Ibid., Ministry of the Interior memorandum, 3 November 1944.

60. Ibid., Letter from Prime Minister's office to the Ministry of Public Instruction, 15 November 1944. Zolli's candidacy for a teaching post was also pressed by Capt. Neufeld. See: Neufeld Papers, Letter from Maurice Neufeld to Hinda Neufeld, 15 February 1945.

61. Zolli File, Letter from Ottolenghi to the Prefecture of Rome, 27 December 1944, and Ottolenghi statement, 26 January 1945.

creed the re-opening of the Rabbinical College with Zolli as its head. Zolli's income in that capacity—plus his pension, that was to be shared by the Trieste and Rome communities—would have guaranteed him an income slightly in excess of what he had been receiving as Chief Rabbi.⁶² Zolli temporarily accepted the offer, but, on February 6, he notified Ottolenghi that he would not assume the direction of the Rabbinical College as he had other possibilities for his “scientific career.” Explaining his decision to a former student at the Rabbinical College, Zolli said, in early February, that wider horizons extending beyond university teaching were opening before him, adding, gratuitously, that he regretted spending so many years of his life with Jews.⁶³

An angry Zolli was convinced that his supporters in the Roman Jewish hierarchical structure had not adequately upheld his cause and that Nathan had shown himself to be weak and without influence. Zolli was even more bitter about Ottolenghi who, he believed, had betrayed him. The Chief Rabbi thought that the extraordinary commissioner had sacrificed him to curry favor with the populace. He had been offered the job as head of the Rabbinical College—virtually a non-existent institution—to side-track and delude him. Rabbi Hochman tried to probe Zolli's troubled psyche: “They [Ottolenghi et al.] thought they were smart. But he was nobody's fool. He would show them.” Hochman went on to compare Zolli with an animal brought to bay: frustrated, humiliated, infuriated.⁶⁴

On February 8, Zolli wrote to Captain Neufeld telling him that he was declining the tendered post at the rabbinical seminary, explaining that, given his less than robust health, he lacked the inner strength to live in so “hot” an atmosphere. Moreover, as head of the college, he would have to work under the jurisdiction of Rabbi Prato who, Zolli hinted, had Fascist tendencies. The somewhat paranoid Zolli seemed envious of Prato's greater popularity and remarked that he, Zolli, had always been cast as a “*guastafesta*” or spoilsport in the community. Zolli was not forthcoming about his plans. The letter to Neufeld was silent on the impending conversion which occurred just five days later.⁶⁵

On February 13, 1945, Israel Zolli and his wife, Emma Maionica Zolli, were baptized in a small chapel inside Santa Maria degli Angeli, the Roman basilica built on the ruins of the Baths of Diocletian, designed by Michelangelo, and today located near Piazza della Repubblica. Perhaps a dozen people—among them several prominent Jesuits, an order for which Zolli had a special affinity—were present for the

62. Neufeld Papers, Container 21, Report of the Extraordinary Commissioner of the Jewish Community, Silvio Ottolenghi, for the Administration Council elected on March 18, 1945, p. 2.

63. Zolli File, Eliseo testimony, 26 July 1945.

64. Hochman statement (undated).

65. Neufeld Papers, Container 21, Letter from Zolli to Neufeld, 8 February 1945.

ceremony. Among those attending were the future Augustin Cardinal Bea, Father Paolo Dezza, who was Pius XII's tutor in Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, and Father Pietro Paolo Boccaccio, who had known Zolli since those pre-war days when the rabbi had taught Hebrew language and literature at the University of Padua. One of the Catholic couples that had sheltered Zolli during the Nazi occupation was also in attendance. Baptism was administered by Monsignor Traglia, whom *L'Osservatore Romano* identified as the *Vicegerente* of Rome. Not surprisingly, in an article entitled, "The Baptism of Professor Zolli," the official Vatican newspaper found it significant that the erstwhile Chief Rabbi had chosen as his baptismal name, Eugenio Maria, in homage to Pius XII.⁶⁶ Readers were also informed that the pastor of Santa Maria degli Angeli, Monsignor Cosimo Bonaldi, together with other Jesuits, had instructed the Zollis in the Christian religion. Apparently, Zolli had been thoroughly prepared for his conversion; that is to say, he already knew Catholicism well when he took the sacrament.⁶⁷ Unbeknownst to those witnessing the baptism, the event took place almost ten years after Zolli—with Jewish converts to Catholicism in mind—had written to Angelo Sacerdoti, then Chief Rabbi of Rome, that the

souls of the patriarchs, Moses, the prophets, the martyrs and rabbis down through the ages trembled before the degrading spectacle of those deserters who repudiate the Torah, fatherland of their spirits and inheritance of their fathers.⁶⁸

We can only wonder if, on February 13, 1945, Zolli himself remembered what he had written in March of 1935.

It was announced that in a few days the newly baptized Zollis would be confirmed, followed shortly after by their taking first communion in the same basilica. Indeed, before long, the Bishop of Trieste, an old friend of Zolli's, confirmed him, and the former Chief Rabbi then received his first communion from Father Dezza.

Dezza had known for some time of Zolli's intention to convert, having been informed in August, 1944, that the rabbi wished to become a Catholic.⁶⁹ During the intervening months, while Zolli secretly planned to join the Catholic Church and while he surreptitiously prepared for his new faith, he continued to serve as the titular spiritual leader of

66. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15 February 1945. Several Roman newspapers commented on Zolli's baptism, not all of them favorably. For example, *Avanti!*, the Socialist daily, announced in clearly sarcastic tone: "Already ex-Zoller, already ex-fascist, Prof. Israel Zolli is now ex-rabbi. This thing of 'ex' represents therefore a special calling, like that to music or mathematics." Writers for the Socialist press had little sympathy for Zolli, ridiculing his conduct during the Nazi period and charging that his spiritual leadership was carried out only at a distance. See: *Avanti!*, 15 February 1945.

67. Father Paolo Dezza, personal interview, Vatican City, 22 May 1987.

68. Quoted in Ettore Ovazzo, *Il problema ebraico—Risposta a Paolo Orano* (Rome: Casa Editrice Pinciana, 1938), pp. 181–182.

69. Dezza interview, 22 May 1987.

Rome's Jews. As late as two days prior to his momentous trip to the baptismal font, Zolli—functioning as president of a rabbinical tribunal—pronounced a divorce between two Yugoslav Jews. Given the fact that his baptism was imminent, this act on his part was retrospectively regarded as duplicitous. In fact, more than one Jewish critic of Zolli has found his behavior in the matrimonial matter hypocritical, in light of the Catholic Church's vehement opposition to divorce. For a fee of a thousand lire, Zolli had trod upon both Jews and Catholics as he carried out a most cynical act.⁷⁰

To the Jews of Rome, who were still recuperating from Nazi persecution, the news of Zolli's conversion struck like a bolt of lightning. They were incredulous, and began almost immediately to vent their hostility on the apostate rabbi, subjecting his entire family to what his daughter, Miriam, remembers as terrible and inhuman treatment.⁷¹ There were threatening phone calls and letters and insults galore. Frightening graffiti such as "Down with the Zollis—Death to the traitor" were reportedly painted on ghetto walls⁷² and Miriam painfully remembers being spat upon in the streets.⁷³ Zolli soon abandoned his apartment at 19 Via S. Bartolomeo ai Vaccinari on the fringes of the ghetto and took up residence at the Pontifical Gregorian University in the Trevi Fountain area.

Until his death in 1956, the former Chief Rabbi lived out his days in the Vatican's employ as a teacher of Semitic studies and biblical exegesis at the Gregoriana. In that center of Catholic orthodoxy he is remembered as an extremely pious, somewhat mystical man of faith and learning. Less than a twenty minute walk away, within the shops and homes that line the Via del Portico d'Ottavia—the main street of the Ghetto directly behind the Synagogue—the name of Zolli is held in very different regard. To this day, among those old enough to remember, or who are attentive enough to learn their community's history, the Jews of Rome react with either quiet dismay or noisy imprecation at the mention of his name. That a rabbi would convert to Catholicism is not unique to Jewish history; that the Chief Rabbi of the Diaspora's most ancient community did so, and at a moment so special to the survival of Judaism, remains a stain on the Jewish historical record that very few Jews, especially those of Italy, are either able or willing to forget, let alone forgive.

70. Zolli File, undated statement of the Jewish Council.

71. Miriam Zolli-deBarnart, personal interview, Rome, 23 May 1987. Even Miriam's daughter, Maura, who was born after her grandfather's conversion, reports being the target of verbal abuse over the years. Maura deBarnart, personal interview, Rome, 23 May 1987.

72. *Palestine Post*, 18 February 1945.

73. Miriam Zolli-deBarnart, interview, 23 May 1987.

Israel

JANET RUTH HELLER

I wanted to flee from Esau,
To escape his taunts
And his bands of thugs.

I ran to the river Jabbok,
But you seized me
And we began to wrestle.

In the gloom between twilight and dawn,
I struggle with you,
Clinging to your torso,
Always maneuvering,
Demanding your name.

Sometimes you twist my sinews and my heart;
Sometimes you strain my back and my thigh;
Sometimes we hold one another,
Amazed at our own power.

Until you bless me,
I will not let go.

JANET RUTH HELLER *is a poet, a teacher and a literary critic.*

The Sanctity of Yom tov and the Joy of the Festival

JOSEPH KLAUSNER
Translated by Simcha Kling

IF THAT PAGAN WHO WENT TO HILLEL THE Elder were to come to me and ask me to teach him the whole Torah “on one foot,” I would tell him: “Judaism is a faith which became life. All the rest is commentary. Go and learn!”

Indeed, so it is. The principle difference between Judaism and other religions in this: in other religions, the basic articles of faith are primary and the religious practices are secondary; in Judaism, the religious practices are the fulfillment and concretization of the religious-national faith and beliefs.

What Judaism teaches is the sanctification of life. Based on abstract faith and religious principles (if, despite Maimonides’ “Thirteen Principles of Faith” there are any principles), sanctification of life is the goal and content of everything called “Judaism.”

Abstract theorizing is not enduring. It has not roots in reality, in actual life; therefore, a new spirit could come and uproot it completely! Indeed, thoughts without acts are nothing more than dry wood. Abstract ideas can easily become confused, warped and eventually forgotten. Moreover, who is able to grasp abstractions? Philosophers, thinkers, exceptional scholars—and they are very few in every generation. How can abstract ideas be embedded in the masses, in an entire people? Was the Torah given only to the elite?

The answer is found in the conclusion of every chapter of *Ethics*, recited on the summer Sabbaths; Rabbi Hananya ben Akashya says (at the end of the Tractate *Makkot*): “The Holy One was pleased to make Israel worthy; wherefore He gave them a copious Torah and many commandments.” Thus, all of a Jew’s life and deeds were sanctified by the sanctity of *mitzvot* which were nothing more than God’s overt or covert will.

That is the Jew’s “Power for his God”!—He introduces God and His holy will into every act that he performs. Without religious acts, religious practices (*mitzvot maasiyot*) there is no Judaism. How does our Mendeleh put it?

Just imagine—we won’t have a *seder* at *Pesah*; we won’t eat *mazah* and *kneidlakh*, we won’t taste a bitter herb, but we’ll put bread and butter on the table while we read the story of the Exodus from Egypt from some

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history book—and thus we'll be Jews. If I were asked: which is more important for Jewish survival, the *megillah* of Esther or the eating of *hamentaschen*?—I would reply without a doubt: *hamentaschen*! Ezekiel said: "Eat this *megillah*." And, indeed, when you eat *hamentaschen* you are swallowing and absorbing unconsciously the "*megillah*"—Jewish history, this entire Hebrew tradition. But a non-Jew who reads about the Exodus from Egypt in the Book of Exodus and the miracle of Purim in the Scroll of Esther, and doesn't eat *mazah* and *kneidlakh* on Pesah, doesn't taste *maror*, and *hamentaschen* do not appear on the table, even if he knows all of Jewish history like a German professor, he still doesn't become a Jew thereby.

II

Now, it is possible for a person to labor and toil constantly, without a break or a rest, and always devote everything he does to religious sanctification? When will he think his holy thoughts that are the basis for his religious actions? If faith without concrete deeds is not worth much, then religious deeds without religious thinking are not worth much. Our sages said: "*mizvot* must be accompanied by meaning."

That is why Sabbaths and Festivals were given as days of respite and rest, together with times of study and reflection. On these holy days, the Jew recognizes the theoretical foundations of religious deeds. But Judaism would have become Christianity or Buddhism if it had limited itself to religious-ethical thoughts alone. It is a Torah of life, and God forbid that it ever be divided into religion *and* life. Judaism is a national political world-outlook rooted in a religious-ethical foundation. It cannot survive only as religion divorced from life or as life divorced from religion. Therefore, together with the holiness of *Shabbat* and the pleasures of *Shabbat* and the sanctity of *Yom tov* is the joy of the festival.

A non-Jewish scholar once translated all of the twenty-four chapters of the tractate *Shabbat* in order to show how burdensome and pedantic Judaism was in restricting the Sabbath-observing Jew with infinite regulations and endless prohibitions. Obviously, this non-Jewish scholar was unable to comprehend the delight of a *Shabbat* with these severities. Even in the works of the Hebrew Enlightenment one can find such views. But one need only ask the truly religious Jew whether the Sabbath brings pain or pleasure. The very question would be amazing. With every fibre of his being, he feels the marvelous pleasure of that holy, sanctified day called *Shabbat*. On this day, he acquires an "additional soul." On *Shabbat* he dons not only a new garment but also a new spirit.

III

The Sabbath, however, is not alone in the Jewish religion. There are also Festivals—"Days of Awe" and "holidays": *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, the three pilgrimage festivals, (*Pesah*, *Shavout* and *Sukkot*).

The Sabbath, since it returns after each of the six working days more than fifty times a year, cannot help but aim at sanctity and rest more than at joy and happiness; therefore its severities. Complete rest, which a person needs after the six days that exhaust the body, is not possible without special attention to the prohibition of any sort of work. After all, if any kind of labor were permitted on the *Shabbat*, beyond what is absolutely required for physical needs, there could not be complete rest. And, then, even the sanctity would be somewhat marred.

That is the reason why, a number of times in the year, we have “Festivals for joy, holidays and special times for gladness.” There is a forthright Mishnah in this regard: “There is no difference between Festival and Sabbath except preparation of food.” Nevertheless, if a festival occurs on Saturday night, we insert in the *v'todiyannu* paragraph of the evening *amidah* and in the *kiddush* these words: “You have differentiated between the sanctity of the Sabbath and that of the festival, and you have sanctified the Sabbath more than the six weekdays; you have separated and sanctified Your people Israel by Your holiness:” and we conclude the *kiddush*: “Praised are You, God, who distinguishes between sanctity and sanctity.” There is, therefore, a recognizable difference between the “sanctity of the Sabbath” and the “sanctity of the festival,” and God is “He who distinguishes between sanctity and sanctity.”

On *Yom tov*, the very fact that it is permissible to prepare food for the day changes the entire mood of the Jew. Who can explain—or, more correctly, convey the feeling of—the great pleasure of the offspring of the previous generation in being permitted on *Yom tov* to step outside the synagogue briefly and smoke a cigarette openly, in front of everyone, without a rebuke? To be sure, there is a *Yom tov* sanctity but it is of a different order.

Part of the sanctity of *Yom tov* is the joy of the festival—“And you shall rejoice in your festival” (Deut. 16:14) and “You shall be wholly joyful” (Deut. 16:15). These words are not said in regard to *Shabbat*. One of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals is even designated as “the time of our rejoicing” (Lev. 16:30).

However, our festivals are not all of the same pattern: they are separated into “Days of Awe” (*yamim noraim*) and “Festivals” (*yamin tovim*). Even the “Days of Awe” are unlike: *Yom Kippur* is completely different from *Rosh Hashanah*.

Yom Kippur is the “Sabbath of Sabbaths” and all of the severities of the Sabbath apply to it—and added to them are the twenty-five consecutive hours of fasting plus four other “afflictions.” Still, there is something of the festive in the solemnity of *Yom Kippur*. The Torah says; “For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the Lord.” That means that before yourself, before your heart and soul—you have to give an account, whether you have sanctified yourself and done your deeds for

a person and for the people for the sake of Heaven, and not for self-glorification and self-benefit. Such a mighty, sacred demand requires a sacred *Yom Kippur*, a day in which the Jew becomes like an angel for twenty-five hours, has no need of food and drink and other human pleasures, and is completely given over to prayer and penitence and reading Scriptures.

And how exalted and uplifted are the two *haftarot* which the Jew chants on this day: one that is read in the morning, from Isaiah 57-58—and one that is read in the afternoon, the Book of Jonah, in which Jewish ethics are raised to heights that can never be surpassed.

With the Isaiah selection, the Jew reads a chapter in which words are like fire. Responding to the question: “Why, when we fasted, did You not see? When we starved our bodies did You pay no heed?” the great Jewish prophet thundered in his mighty voice:

Is such the fast I desire?
To unlock the fetters of wickedness
And untie the cords of the yoke.
To let the oppressed go free;
To break off every yoke,
It is to share your bread with the hungry
And to take the wretched poor into your home;
When you see the naked, to clothe him,
And not to ignore your own kin . . .

And together with his exalted ethic is a practical *mizvah*:

If you refrain from trampling the sabbath
From pursuing your affairs on My holy day:
If you call the sabbath “delight”
The Lord’s holy day “honored”
And if you honor it and go not your ways
Nor look to your affairs, nor strike bargains

—for Judaism includes ethical commands . . . together with religiousocial commands such as Sabbath observance.

That is the first *haftarah* of *Yom Kippur*. The second *haftarah*—the Book of Jonah—may be even more exalted than the first.

A prophet in the Kingdom of Samaria who foretold good for the Kingdom of Israel in the days of Jereboam II is commanded by God to persuade Nineveh, the capitol city of Assyria, which would one day destroy that very kingdom of Israel, to repent. The prophet flees before the Lord in a ship headed for a distant country; he does not want to save the future destroyer of his land, his people. But the God of Israel, who wants the repentance of the wicked, of non-Jews as well as of Jews, causes a storm over the sea. Jonah is thrown overboard, swallowed by a great fish, prays to God “from the belly of the fish,” which spews the prophet out upon dry land,—and he must fulfill the command of his God. The people of Nineveh repent, fast and cover themselves with sackcloth and ashes, “cry out mightily unto the Lord and

everyone turns back from his evil ways and from injustice of which he is guilty.” And the book then says: “God saw what they did, how they were turning back from their evil ways. And God renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon them, and did not carry it out.”

The prophet from Israel has saved the city and the people who would one day destroy his land and his people. This “displeased him greatly.” Therefore, he begs God: “Take my life, for I would rather die than live. He leaves Nineveh and “finds a place east of the city,” where the heat is great and difficult. There God provides a plant with large and broad leaves, and it gives shade for his head. Jonah is “very happy over the plant,” but a worm came, attacked the plant—“the sun beat down on Jonah’s head, and he became faint.” Again, he begs for death, saying: “I would rather die than live!” God asks him: “Are you so grieved about the plant?” and Jonah repeats anew: “So deeply that I want to die.” Then the God of Israel, Master of the entire universe, says to Jonah His prophet-messenger, words the likes of which in their loftiness have not been found in any religious-ethical work to this day: “You cared about the plant, which you did not work for and which you did not grow, which appeared overnight and perished overnight And should I not care about Nineveh, that great city in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not yet know their right hand from their left, and many beasts as well!” That is what the Jew reads on the holy day of *Yom Kippur* near *ne’ilah*.

Who has the ability to describe the holy trepidation which overtakes the Jew at the sanctified hour of the beginning of *Yom Kippur*, when the cantor sings that unique melody of *Kol Nidrei*, a statement which, after all, only negates vows.

By authority of the court on high and by the authority of this court below, with divine consent and with the consent of this congregation, we hereby declare that it is permitted to pray with those who have transgressed.

What Jew can be absolutely sure that he is not one of those who “have transgressed?”—if not against “divine consent,” then against “this congregation”?

The *Unetaneh tokef* that is said before *musaf* on both *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* is a magnificent poetical picture which only a deeply dramatic and creative mind could have set forth.

You open the Book of Remembrance and it speaks for itself, for every man has signed it with his deeds.

The great shofar is sounded. A still small voice is heard. This day even the angels are alarmed and seized with fear and trembling as they declare: “The day of judgment is here!” For even the hosts of heaven are judged. This day, all who walk the earth pass before You as a flock of sheep, Then follows the long list of decrees for life or death.

All of this is recited not only on *Rosh Hashanah*, the start of new

life in the new year, but, also, on *Yom Kippur*, the conclusion of the “Days of Awe” and the “Ten Days of Repentance.”

Regarding this holy and purifying day, the day of fasting and repentance, of prayer and forgiveness and atonement, the Mishnah says:

The Jewish people has not had such good days as the fifteenth of Av and *Yom Kippur* on both of which the maidens went forth in white garments and the daughters of Jerusalem went forth to dance in the vineyards. And what did they say?—“Young man, lift up your eyes and see to choose.”

There are those who have suggested that the Mishnah be amended to read *Yom Purim* instead of *Yom Hakippurim*. The contemporary Diaspora Jew cannot imagine that, on such a holy and sanctified day, young men and maidens would dance in the vineyards and that young men would come on such a holy day to look at the girls. However, whoever has the slightest critical sense would never allow the thought that some stupid scribe could have mixed up *Yom Hapurim* and *Yom Hakippurim*. The two words must come from original and authentic source. In truth, this Mishnah is completely within the spirit of Judaism, a spirit which is neither Christianity nor Buddhism. Authentic Judaism is rather the decree: “Whoever eats and drinks on the ninth (i.e., the day before *Yom Kippur*) is regarded by Scriptures as if he had fasted on both the ninth and the tenth.” Judaism is prayer and repentance and self-recognition, but it is not self-mortification or absention.

IV

Rosh Hashanah is another matter. It is natural that, at the start of the New Year a person remembers all that he has done in the year that has just passed and makes an inner accounting: did he do better or worse in the past year, did he sin and how did he sin? Furthermore, it would not be possible for such a day to be merely a *Yom tov* a happy holiday.

“When a ram’s horn is sounded in a town, do the people not take alarm?” We must note the special character of *Rosh Hashanah* that it is both a “joyful festival” and one of the “Days of Awe.” The blowing of the shofar, preceded by the seven-time recitation of Psalm 47, and followed by the longest of all Jewish prayers, the *Rosh Hashanah musaf* (including the trumpeting of *malchuyot*, *zikhronot* and *shofarot*) convey to the congregation soberness, even fear. And the *Rosh Hashanah* days (there are two even in *Erez Yisrael*) become days of Awe” more than “holidays and special times for joy.” The *shmoneh esrei* prayer on *Rosh Hashanah*, which is older than that of *Yom Kippur*, fills the heart with awe and fear before the glorious majesty of God, Creator of heaven and earth and Judge of all creation. Not only because God is all-powerful and uses His power to threaten and suppress, but because God’s holy will is that all creatures “will bind together to do Your will whole-

heartedly." And what is the will of God? It is "to grant honor to Your people, joy to Your land and gladness to Your city (Jerusalem), the kindling of the lamp of the son of Jesse Your anointed one, speedily, in our day."

The over-all humanistic ideal, the religio-ethical hope to do away with evil and see the kingdom of wickedness disappear is here united with the national-political ideal of the Davidic Kingdom and with the religious-universal goal of the kingdom of Heaven on earth, the center of which will be in Zion and whose rule will extend over the entire universe. That is the "tefillah of the Days of Awe" which is unique in religious literature.

The sounds of the *shofar*, the *tekiot* and *shevarim* and *truot* on *Rosh Hashanah*, serve to bring to mind the mighty, exalted and unique phenomenon which we call "the Revelation at Sinai." And a people who experienced such an overwhelming phenomenon at the dawn of its history may never degrade itself by evil deeds, by sins and transgressions. But, if it did sin and transgress, the sound of the *shofar*—the reminder of the Revelation at Sinai—should lead to repentance, to returning to the source of greatness and might, of glory holiness. That is what *Rosh Hashanah* should say to the Jew. Is it any wonder that the Day of Remembrance is one of the "Days of Awe"?

Nevertheless, *Rosh Hashanah* remains a *Yom tov*. It is connected with a joyful and encouraging event that had a decisive influence on the national fate. "When the seventh month arrived," in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, "the entire people assembled in the square before the Water Gate" and Ezra the scribe read to them from "the book of God's Torah" from morning until midday, from "a wooden tower made for the purpose." The Levites and "understanding ones" stood to his right and to his left, explaining the Torah. . . . When the assembled gathering heard what the Torah demanded and recalled how they had lived, they wept and mourned over the contrast between what was proper and what was reality.

Then Nehemiah the Tirshatma, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were explaining to the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord Your God; you must not mourn or weep. . . . Go, eat choice food and drink sweet drinks and send portions to whoever has nothing prepared, for the day is holy to our Lord. Do not be sad. For your rejoicing in the Lord is the source of your strength.

Everyone thereupon went home "to eat and drink and send portions and make great merriment."

The great scholar of the eighteenth century, the Gaon of Vilna, would be upset when the singing on *Rosh Hashanah* would extend beyond midday: *Rosh Hashanah* is a *Yom tov* and God forbid that it become a sad day of half-fasting. That is the real Judaism: self-reckoning, "remembrance of all one's deeds," and whole-hearted repentance, but also

“eating choice food and drinking sweet drinks and sending portions to whoever has nothing prepared.”

V

There is a Jewish tradition that immediately upon returning home from the synagogue after the conclusion of *Yom Kippur*, one drives into the ground a peg for the building of the *sukkah*. The reason is, to begin the new *mizvah* immediately after the forgiving of sins. Actually, there is also another reason: to remind all, right after the solemn fast, of “the time of our rejoicing.”

Rosh Hashanah and *Yom Kippur*, with the seven days between them, constitute “the ten days of repentance.” Thus, there is a long line of sad days. But Judaism would be Catholicism or Buddhism rather than Judaism had it not arranged to have joyous days follow sad ones.

The *sukkah* and its adornments, the *etrog* and *lulav*, the wavings of the palms and the Torah parades, the water drawing ritual on *hol hamoed*, the beating of the willows on *Hoshanah Rabbah* and—over all—*Simhat Torah*, which is a special day for glee and merriment, even revelry, of dancing and Torah-parades in the synagogue and in the streets, with the eating of honeycake and drinking of wine (or even liquor) in the synagogue itself—all of this is a kind of compensation, a sort of recompense or reparation for the sadness of the month of Elul and the ten days of repentance and, especially, for the stringent fast of *Yom Kippur*.

Let not our sensitive seekers of the spirit maintain that Judaism has survived only because of monotheism, “the mission of Israel” and other abstract and lofty concepts. It has also survived because of the pleasure of Sabbath and the joy of festival, because of special foods as well as penitential prayers and dirges and sad prayers of fast days or of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. A wholesome people does not live on abstractions and intellectual considerations and certainly not on weeping and fasting. Religious *conduct* is the carrying out of abstract and lofty religious ideas. It “eats” the *megillah* together with a *hamen-taschen*: it swallows the penitential prayers of *Yom Kippur* together with the cakes on the eve of *Yom Kippur*; it gives in to the strictness of *Shabbat* because of the delight of Sabbath pleasure and it tolerates weeping and fasting because of the beauty of *Sukkot* and the adornment of the “four species” and the happiness and merriment of *Simhat Torah*. There could be no sanctity of the festival without the joy of the festival.

This is also true of other pilgrimage festivals.

To be sure, *Pesah* is the Spring Festival as well as the memorial of the Exodus, both tremendous and beautiful ideas. But they would not penetrate the very soul of the people were there not *mazah*, the seder and perhaps even the reading of the “Song of Songs,” whether under-

stood as love poetry or as a dialogue between the “bride” (the Jewish people) and the “groom” (the Holy One blessed be He).

To be sure, *Shavuot* is both the Harvest Festival and the “time of the giving of our Torah.” But, together with the sanctity of the festival and the joy of the festival, a major role is played by the wonderful poetic description of the Event at Sinai, the staying awake through the festival night, the dairy food, and, perhaps, the reading of the Scroll of Ruth is incomparable in its beauty and its exaltation of modesty and virtue.

Thus, we find in all of the “Days of Awe” and festivals a blend of festive sanctity and joy, of lofty, holy ideas and religious practices and customs which stir the heart.

Therefore, we dare not say: We have come to *Erez Yisrael*; here we live on our land and speak Hebrew; we are national Jews and need not fast on *Yom Kippur* or rejoice on *Simhat Torah*, sanctify the festivals or perform the rituals. Once the Jew ceases to celebrate these festivals in their uniquely Jewish manner, the Jewish heart will dry up in the land of its Fathers. Indeed, it is possible that changes may take place in the course of time, but God forbid that we ignore or even alter the basic and principal forms.

I know that there is a very basic question:

After six million Jews have been annihilated, . . . and after even in our own land—the land of David, Solomon, the Hasmoneans and the land of Moses, Isaiah and Psalms—there are those who mock us, pursue us and seek to suppress us completely, perhaps the conclusion is utterly erroneous? Perhaps, Heaven forbid, “God is bankrupt” (as the poet says in “The City of Slaughter”) and it is no longer worthwhile nor is it an obligation to observe His commands and celebrate the Festivals of His Torah?

I have two answers to this question:

First, the “Days of Awe” and the Festivals come from the depth of the nation’s soul and that soul will be destroyed with the extinction of these holy, exalted days. Thus, this is not a religious question alone, but one which is both religious and national at the same time.

Second, our God is not only imminent but transcendental as well. The human mind is limited and all that has been done to us in recent years, evil beyond all evils, could lead to despair. However, God’s mind is not like a human’s. Years may pass, indeed not very many years, and everything could change.

For as the new heaven and the new earth
Which I shall make
Shall endure by My will
declares the Lord—
So shall your seed and your name endure.
(Isaiah 66:22)

Not in vain has a people lived four thousand years—not merely lived but created (there were ancient peoples who simply lived but created nothing after a short period of blossoming): created prophets, and teachers; created Simon B. Gamliel and Maimonides and Spinoza, Disraeli and Bergson and Einstein. A people like this, more talented than others, also suffers more than they. But its future inevitably must be great and good. Perhaps the Messianic Days, not so far off according to the reckoning of a “far-away God,” are coming—they must come if humanity is not to destroy itself entirely. And they will first come to the Jews; only through the Jews can they come to all peoples. The Messianic idea is ours and its realization is ours. In Zion, where it was born, will be its center and its culmination. Let us never despair, let us never abandon our ancestral heritage. Let us increase it, better it, perfect it—and days are coming when it will be to us and to our children “for fame, and praise, and splendor” (Jeremiah 13:11) as God spoke to His prophet. And the words for our prophets will endure forever!

Two Jews—Freud and Gay

BENJAMIN GOODNICK

SIGMUND FREUD CONTINUES TO BE A SPRING of living waters where writers still quench their psychological thirst and fructify their intellectual fields. Whether because of the fascinating features of his history and personality, the vast impact of his creativity on our culture, the hidden depth to which he has exposed and touched our individual, sensitive psyches, or the novel applications of his hypotheses, any new Freudian work excites our interest.

In recent days Freud has been the major stimulus for psycho-historians to apply the clarifying light of psychoanalysis to the lives of nations and their leaders. Foremost among these is Dr. Peter Gay, who has maintained his jet-pace of researching and writing with the publication of two books on Freud, *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (1987) and *Freud: A Life for our Times* (1988).

Dr. Gay probably has more right than his colleagues to examine Freud's outlooks. He is unique in having undertaken an intensive seven-year study (c. 1977–84) of psychoanalytical research at the Western New England Institute of Psychoanalysis and has remained an active member of the institute. His time was not squandered; he has utilized these analytical tools to enhance his later historical writings, which have brought him wider recognition.

In view of Gay's apparently strong bonds to Freud, it might be of more than academic interest to explore aspects that they share: their common roots, their ancestry. This seems especially appropriate since Gay (e.g., in *A Godless Jew*) bares his views of the roles of Judaism and Jewishness in Freud's development of psychoanalysis. Indeed, a comparison of Freud's and Gay's approaches to their origins would be timely and edifying. Coincidentally, 1987 also commemorated the ninetieth anniversary of Freud's first opportunity to present his "Dream Interpretation" before the Vienna B'nai B'rith lodge, since the academic leadership had denied him a platform to speak on his novel psychoanalytical theories.

Historical perspectives, with or without the use of psychoanalysis, can be manipulated like a kaleidoscope, shifting their pattern and coloration with a swift twist of the historian's wrist. Since no one, no scholar, has all the facts or all of the identical facts, portrayals of any period can, and do, differ widely, depending on whose hand is pushing the

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pen. The mind, moreover—should we say the heart?—is deliberately or unconsciously selective, choosing those data, those facts and figures that blend smoothly with the individual's make-up and *weltanschauung* to form his/her historical *gestalt*. As the Psalmist put it: "The heart is deceitful above all; who can know it?"

Gay, however, in his *Style in History* (1974), claims that "private perspectives can be, in the right hands, a pathway to historical knowledge . . ." In other words, subjective judgments can lead to objective findings; but even this is a subjective evaluation. Yet, he also states that ". . . it is the nature of men's mental sets to see what they seek." The question remains: "Who, which historian, has the "right hands"?"

Peter Gay himself gives us an excellent example of the "wrong hands." In *Freud, Jews, and Other Germans* (1978), he points to Ernest Nolte, author of *Germany and the Cold War* (1974), as a ". . . prominent, even famous . . . modern German historian" who whitewashes, almost justifies, the concentration camps of the Nazis, offering an apologia rather than an apology for the Holocaust. Describing Nolte's writing, Gay notes that it is "a bit of reality with a mass of prejudice and morass of clichés . . ." held together "by a thin trickle of facts."

Freud himself could be considered the first psychobiographer in his attempts to interpret the acts and thoughts of, among others, Leonardo da Vinci and Moses. At first he considered his analyses of these men imaginative; note that one of his titles was *The Man Moses, a Historical Fiction*. Only later was he convinced that his portrayals were correct. Yet, in doing so, he set aside, or remained oblivious of, facts that seemed to contradict his own basic premises.

His approach to such writing seems inconsistent. In a letter to Fliess he says: ". . . we must also take hold of biography (in addition to mythology)."¹ Later, he told Ernest Jones that there is "too much slippery ground in many applications of psychoanalysis to biography and literature."²

Evidently, the Jewish (Hebraic) maxim, "Respect him and suspect him," can be applied to historians as well as to "average" people. We cannot, we must not, dissociate the character of the chronicler from his/her pronouncements. This forewarning, then, applies with equal force to the works of Freud and Gay. Brief sketches of their lives may help us understand the direction of their thinking and writing.

Both men were born (about 70 years apart) into families having, by happenstance, surnames with a similar, positive ring: Freud ("joy") and Fröhlich ("happy"), later changed to Gay. They spent their formative years at home in favorable positions, Peter Jack apparently alone and Sigismund (later Sigmund) as the oldest of seven siblings.

1. Ronald W. Clark, *Freud: The Man and the Cause* (1980), p. 344.

2. Ibid, p. 361.

During this period their respective fathers were engaged in business ventures, though Jacob Freud's circumstances were probably more modest and less stable. By the time Sigmund was three, the family had departed for Vienna, whereas the Frölichs were established in Berlin. Thus, both lads were educated primarily within the major urban centers of German culture.

Then World War II played its part. Freud had spent almost all of his life in the same environment, mainly the same apartment, leaving for England almost on the brink of the war. At about the same time, the Frölichs, while Peter was still young, had to leave for the United States, where they faced the immigrants' struggles before achieving financial security.

Fortunately, both protagonists, despite modest living conditions, found others who recognized their outstanding abilities. Amalia Freud might be expected to call her first-born son "my golden Zigi" and see him as destined for greatness, but others, too, perceived his brilliance. For seven years he was first in his class at school, freed of tuition payments and of final examinations. He received grants for neurological research and prepared outstanding papers on his findings. It was his impending marriage and need for funds that forced Freud into private practice, which led, eventually, to his discovery of psychoanalysis.

Peter Gay had to leave high school before his graduation and to work in order to augment the family income. Yet, he, too, found others, especially teachers, who recognized his talent, insisted on working with him and, aided by his own driving spirit and self-assurance, helped him succeed. We have here a variant of the Joseph story; descent from status and riches to degradation and poverty, and a subsequent rise to fame and fortune.

Gay, who is presently Sterling Professor at Yale, has received an award for *The Enlightenment* (I, 1966; II, 1969), an outstanding work on European culture of the eighteenth century, and was highly acclaimed for his recent *The Bourgeois Experience* (I, 1984; II, 1986; with four more projected volumes), an awesome venture and one highly flavored with Freudianism. His most recent books on Freud were preceded by others on pre-war Germany (e.g., *Weimar Culture* [1968] and *Freud, Jews and Other Germans* [1978]).

What about the Jewish aspects of their lives? To grasp their significance we must turn back to their original environment, earliest upbringing, the source of lifetime attitudes. Here we are confronted by contrasts.

Jacob Freud, a descendant of a hassidic, learned family, and his wife, Amalia, from the hassidic center of Brody, maintained a traditional household in Freiberg, Moravia, where Sigmund was born. This Jewishly-steeped home pattern apparently continued in Vienna, for Freud freely acknowledges that he learned the biblical stories before he could

read and was taught the Pentateuch from a text with German translation and commentary. He was attached to his Hebrew teacher, a Samuel Hammerschlag, a dear friend in time of need. Indeed, most of the close friends of his family, as well as of his future bride's family, seem to have had a measure of Jewish observance and strong Jewish interests.

By contrast, Moritz Peter Fröhlich is described by his son as being "wholly assimilated, 'Jewish' only by Nazi edict, content in his business . . ." His "neutral" name and acceptable physical appearance, the son relates, made him seem more Aryan than his non-Jewish business partner. Actually, he was able, in 1936, to obtain tickets to attend the World Olympics where he and his son cheered the American winners.³

Obviously, from these disparate backgrounds, differences in outlook would be expected, towards both Jewish as well as German culture. Thus, in his latest works, Peter Gay focuses on Freud's theories and experiences. In *A Godless Jew* he first recounts the well-worn theme, the battle of "Science Against Religion," in which he describes how religion—read clericalism—resisted tenaciously the scientific assault on its sacred towers or absorbed scientific methods to achieve its own goals.

His main objective, however, seems to be the transformation of Freud into the last *philosophe*, an appendage to eighteenth-century Enlightenment. This period, idealized by Gay, is characterized by rationalistic methods and skepticism toward established dogma. Proferring extensive sources from the Enlightenment, Gay asserts that Freud was a true atheist and further asserts that a search for "common ground" between theology and psychoanalysis can only be doomed to "failure," concluding, finally, that Jewishness has no claim whatsoever on the science of psychoanalysis—despite Freud's emphatic affirmation to the contrary.

At the same time, Gay, the Enlightenment scholar, fully knows that "it was the anti-Christian, neo-pagan philosophers of the Enlightenment, led by Voltaire, and the 'romantic' reaction that they provoked who are the true fathers of the modern anti-semitism," an association that Freud would vehemently denounce.⁴

In *Freud: A Life for our Times* (1988), Gay concludes that "Freud the conventional bourgeois battled Freud the scientific conquistador every step of the way." True. However, this battle might be better understood as a lifelong contest between the strong imprint of Freud's early Jewish moral training and a powerful native drive for independence and leadership. To attain fame, he had to become an iconoclast; to establish his own new "faith" he felt impelled to renounce Judaism. He remained so conflicted all of his life.

Compared with this monumental work, *A Golden Jew* (1987) seems

3. "At Home In America," *The American Scholar* (Winter 1977): 31–42.

4. Samuel Schafler, "Enemies or Jew-Haters? Reflections on the History of Anti-Semitism," *JUDAISM* (Summer 1988):137.

a triviality blown into a trumpet. But the specific issues discussed therein must have long distressed the author. What is Gay trying to prove? ". . . I am devoting the rest of this book to demonstrating this argument—that if Freud had been a believer like James, he would not have developed psychoanalysis." Put simply, Gay believes that psychoanalysis must be godless. Apparently eschewing Marxism, deism, and Judaism, Gay seems to have found his faith by following Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, and has been attempting to mold him into his own (i.e., Gay's) image. But he does not succeed. The weight of words—adding reference to reference, quotation to quotation, expression to expression—may overwhelm, but it does not convince.

He acknowledges that Freud "advertised his unbelief every time he could find . . ." and reminds us of Freud's oft-repeated comment: "Why did psychoanalysis have to wait for a completely godless Jew?" But this question is more rhetorical than real. We might as well ask: Why did genetics, a more thoroughly grounded science, have to wait for a monk, Gregor Mendel? Or the laws of gravity for the mind of Newton, a believer? Indeed, Gay himself refers to "the kind of pious scientist with which eighteenth-century England was richly endowed."⁵

But perhaps another, deeper intent, a muffled yet anguished cry, lies imprisoned within this query. Perhaps Freud is inquiring of his people: Why did this knowledge of psychoanalysis have to delay so long? Why could not earlier a believing Jew—or I, while still believing—have made this discovery? Why could not my original faith have encompassed this new discovery—so that I would not have had to cast it aside?

The question as to whether psychoanalysis is a Jewish science is double-pronged: 1. Is psychoanalysis a science? and 2. Is psychoanalysis Jewish?

As to the first, a science is commonly defined as a logical, systematized structure of laws that are verifiable and replicable. Psychoanalysis does not seem to have such laws. Like the theories found within an academic discipline such as history, for example, it does contain a body of organized knowledge. But, despite its many years of productivity and expansion, it still remains one theory of personality development among others and one therapeutic method among others. Indeed, Dr. Ernest Jones reported Freud himself as saying:

"I always envy the physicists and mathematicians who can stand on firm ground. I hover, so to speak, in the air. Mental events seem to be immeasurable and probably always will be so."⁶

On the other hand, there is no doubt as to the profound, revolutionary influence of psychoanalysis on psychological thinking, and the fecundity of its underlying principles, which have been applied to other

5. *The Enlightenment*, p. 186.

6. Clark, *Op. cit.*, p. 470.

fields of endeavor, such as art, history, and literature. By the same token, however, science, as such, cannot be Jewish, for the laws of nature are objective and available for everyone to discover.

Is psychoanalysis Jewish?

Here Gay deplores Freud's view of kindred Jewish traits and of Jews as being "exceptionally equipped to do psychoanalysis." He further rejects the "dubious notion" of E. Jones that Jews have an "aptitude for psychological intuition." Yet he quotes Roback who sees the origin of psychoanalysis in the

peculiar make-up of the Jew, who is analytical in a psychological sense, and who is constantly reflecting on the why and wherefore of everything, as exemplified in Ecclesiastes.⁷

Gay accepts external forces, a sociological basis only. Freud's alienation and freedom from majority prejudices provided the thrust for challenging old ideas, exploring new concepts, pounding on academe's door with novel psychological theories, all culminating in the development of psychoanalysis. Could he not have discovered some internal factor, some value or virtue in Freud's Jewishness that helped plant, sprout, or nourish the blossoming and fruition of psychoanalytical sensitivities?

One tends to wonder why Gay belabors and belittles the issue of Jewishness. He seems deeply disturbed that Jews might be different from others and resists forcefully ". . . the untenable notion that Jews are by endowment more intelligent than other people." His view is strange, especially since he recognizes that "history is a Darwinian battle." A brief survey of Jewish history would have suggested that the persecutions and decimations of the Jewish people over the millennia inevitably led to the survival of the fittest. It would appear that Gay did not take the opportunity to note, for example, the disproportionate number of Jewish Nobel prize winners—unless, in his egalitarian stance, he perceives their unique contributions as belonging to Germany, France, America and Russia rather than to the Jewish people.

We find other paradoxes in Gay's writing, some of them quite glaring. He is infatuated with *les philosophes* because of their denunciation of orthodoxies and rigidities, and their rational approach to the study of nature, even attributing to them a foreknowledge of Freudian concepts (e.g., "intimations of the unconscious, the superego, rationalization, and sublimation.") Yet, in *A Godless Jew* he proves to be most fixed and unchanging in his adherence to orthodox Freudianism while remaining oblivious to the psychoanalytical developments of the last fifty or more years.

A comparison between Gay's *Freud, Jews and Other Germans* (1978) and his 1987 volume seems appropriate. If the former volume, in part

7. A. A. Roback, *Jewish Influences in Modern Thought* (1929), pp. 166–167.

"painful" (though "a prolonged pleasure") for the author to have written after decades in America, is considered as expiation for his long-standing negative feelings regarding Germany, then, certainly, *A Godless Jew* appears to serve as a vehicle for self-justification of his own ashenic, indifferent Jewishness.

Likewise, we might perceive *Moses and Monotheism* as a desperate attempt by Freud to lay at rest the ghost that tormented him all of his life, his forsaking active Jewish loyalty. Without probing deeply into Freud's psyche, we can say with a measure of assurance that his original strong objections as a youth dealt with the imposition of Judaic customs and rites, "the yoke of the law," and not the principles of his faith. As Ernest Jones reports, Freud "detested all ceremonies, especially religious ones . . ." ⁸ Of course, this aversion applied only to those seen as forced upon him, not to those rigid patterns and compulsive behaviors of his own making.

How can we best portray and perceive these two men as to their Jewish outlooks?

Freud, raised in a traditional home in modest circumstances and feeling forced to cast aside Judaism, sought a new faith in his "scientific" psychoanalysis with—as he claimed—its attendant atheism. Yet, he exposes his underlying, renounced yet conflictual, Judaic attachments: using divine terminology (e.g., "our god Logos"); insatiably collecting antiquities and statuettes of divinities; forbidding Jewish practices as "superstition" (e.g., lighting of Friday night candles) while condoning Christian customs (e.g., lit-up Christmas trees and painted Easter eggs); writing of . . . "strange secret yearnings perhaps from my ancestral heritage . . . wishes from late childhood never to be fulfilled . . ."; frequently quoting biblical passages; subscribing to "mysterious bonds" with his fellow-Jews and extolling Zionism.

We might assert that his acquiescence, as an adult, to having Christmas gifts and Easter eggs, would probably appear to him as an innocuous indulgence of his children in the patterns of the general community and as a family celebration. How could he refuse them when his adjoining office was replete with pagan deities? In fact, we may see here his recognition of the power of Jewish faith and practice over those of Christianity, for the latter never troubled him.

For Gay, atheism emerged out of a liberal, comfortable, sports-minded *jüdischkeit-rein* household. ". . . I had been at home in Germany," he says, and was quite contented until, as he acknowledges, Hitler's edict made a Jew out of him. His enduring attachment to Germany is exposed by the very speed with which, as he claims, he became "At Home in America." ⁹ He directly absorbed American culture and an-

8. Ernest Jones, *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* (1953), vol. I, p. 140.

9. *American Scholar* (Winter 1977):41-2.

glicized his name. Moreover, though he was speaking of his father, Gay reveals his own deep, enduring German antipathy towards *Ostjuden*. He accuses Jews from Poland and Galicia—even those born in the United States—of being unable to adapt as readily as he did to a new environment, while he is capable of “. . . seeing all gentiles as . . . friends.” Yet, it took him more than thirty years to overcome his bitterness toward Hitler and the German people for making him into a pariah, hardly a sign of a prompt adjustment. Indeed, he does protest too strongly, after tarring all German culture with the same Nazi brush. His loss was personal, not Jewish.

Apparently, his clear view holds that wherever Jews retained their sense of distinctiveness they remained uncomfortable and anxious. Only where they were fully assimilated were they comfortable and well adjusted—Jewish minds and hearts without Jewishness. Freud, obviously, belongs in the first group.

The name change is a most interesting phenomenon. After all, there were many thousands of German Jewish refugees who suffered more at the hands of the Nazis and never thought of altering their names and yet they aided the war effort in various capacities. Gay's case is analogous to a loving woman who is rejected by a lover and flees pell-mell into the arms of another. It was probably a swing of the pendulum, hatred for Germany rather than love for America, that made him cling to his new home so quickly, his protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, Gay has been happy in America, not because here every group can freely maintain its own culture and live by it, but precisely because the open opportunity exists for the individual to discard these diversities. Significant in this connection is his apparent pride in banishing from his vocabulary “that ugly word goy,” “a word my father taught me to destest,” presumably as an act of humanitarianism. In his view, a “flight from tradition” becomes a “flight into humanity.”¹⁰

Probably he never consciously considered both of his acts (i.e. choice of “Gay” and removal of “goy”) as having anti-Jewish aspects serving to efface the last vestige of Jewishness from his life. Peter Gay seems to be asking to obliterate differences between Jew and non-Jew, whereas Freud sought to enhance and to illuminate these distinctions. Did Gay not realize that “goy” is not intended as a pejorative term? In our own liturgy and literature, Israel is designated as *goy eḥad*, “one nation.”¹¹ Significantly, too, “goy” occurs twice in the oft-recited passage from Isaiah 2:4, “Nation shall not take up sword against nation.”

True, Gay and Freud do have traits in common: they are brilliant, energetic, daring, self-confident, self-motivating individuals, proud, resourceful, skilled writers, conscious of their abilities, struggling for

10. Peter Gay, *Style in History*, p. 188.

11. e. g., II Samuel, 7:23.

greatness, and reacting strongly to early adolescent traumas. Despite differences in early personal history, their psychological response to their youthful crises was similar. Neither could forsake or forfeit his original allegiance; both were continually striving to fill the void of a lost, idyllic childhood as revealed through the defense mechanism of displacement, rationalization, denial and reversal-formation.

Their differences also endure. There are strong indications that Freud was deeply “tormented” by the unique phenomenon of the existence of a Moses, leader and law giver. Further, he avoided mentioning the name of Theodor Herzl, another leader, and the founder of modern Zionism. It seems that Freud visualized himself, rather, as the true leader of his people Israel, bringing them into a new land of freedom and self-understanding. This yearning is a far cry from the goals of Peter Gay.

Sigmund Freud always retained and cherished within himself “*das pintelev Yid*”; Peter Gay seems never to have had any. Freud believed in the uniqueness of the Jewish people; Gay rejected that idea. Freud was concerned with Jewish survival; Gay never was. Both of these believers in orthodox psychoanalysis claim to have no faith—but, Jewishly, they remain worlds apart. No mighty bridge of words can traverse that abyss.

Ultimately, we must return to Gay’s revision of Sigmund Freud’s dictum that “anatomy is destiny” into “culture is destiny.” Dr. Gay’s simple yet profound statement is correct; his Jewish perspective proves it.

Psalm

PAUL CELAN

(translated from German by Bernhard Frank)

No-one shall knead us again out of earth and mud.
No-one shall resurrect our dust.
No-one.

Praise unto you, No-one.
For your sake shall
we bloom
towards
you.

Nothing
is what we were, are, shall
remain, in bloom:
the Nothing-, the
No-man's rose.

With
the soul-bright pistil
the stamen's no-man's-land-heaven
and the corona red
from the purpleword, we chanted
above, o above
the thorn.

PAUL CELAN is a noted Jewish Rumanian-born poet, who, despite Nazi persecution, continued to write in German. He committed suicide by drowning in the Seine.

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British Prayer

Review-Essay by ELLIOT N. DORFF

Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship. Edited by the Assembly of Rabbis of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. London: The Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. 1977, Vol. I: Daily, Sabbath, and Occasional Prayers, 627 pp.; 1985, Vol. III: Prayers for the High Holydays, 1051 pp.

THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN GREAT BRITAIN is roughly equivalent to the Conservative Movement in North America, in that both have a strong traditional bent while recognizing the legitimacy of change in both law and liturgy. It should not be a surprise, then, that these publications of the British Reform Movement retain much of traditional liturgy in both Hebrew and English translation while shortening it, altering some of its forms, and adding contemporary material to it.

What is pleasantly surprising is the sensitivity and skill with which this work has been done. No doubt, the editors' success is in part due to the clarity of their aims. As expressed in their Preface and Introduction, they had several goals: to translate the Hebrew text into contemporary English to capture its directness and lucidity; to take liturgical recognition of the Holocaust, the State of Israel, and the prevalent religious doubts and secularism of modern Jews; to inspire Jews to practice their religion not only in the synagogue, but also at home and at work; to integrate the various liturgies of both Sephardim and Ashkenazim to fashion a rich and united liturgy for a united Jewry, consciously ignoring sectarian labels; and to strengthen the bond between prayer and study as a means of bridging the gulf between past belief and present doubt. Both Volume I and Volume III (I imagine Volume II will deal with the Festivals) succeed admirably in accomplishing these goals.

Perhaps the first thing that one notices about these books is the handsome way in which they have been produced. The print is in bold, clean type of sufficient size and with enough white space to insure easy reading. Margin notes reinforce the theme of the prayers to help the worshipper focus on them. The paper is thick enough to give one a

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sense of substance and to put one at ease in turning pages. The nicest surprises of all, though, are the drawings that are scattered throughout the text, of people praying and studying and of old and new synagogues and schools of higher Jewish learning. The black and white drawings, rather than color photographs, preserve the sense of dignity and tradition which one wants in a prayerbook, but visual representations, even more than mere words, enable one to feel part of a worldwide people with very deep roots in prayer and study. The extensive use of such illustrations in the *Avodah* service on *Yom Kippur* is a good response to contemporary people's lack of familiarity with the ritual of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem.

The other feature of these prayerbooks which one immediately notices is the rich collection of excerpts from biblical, rabbinic, medieval, and modern writers that are offered as additional or alternative readings and/or as sources for study. The study anthology toward the end of the *Mahzor* for the High Holydays, arranged according to topic, consists of fully 152 pages of such material! The Torah and *Haftarah* readings in the *Mahzor* are accompanied with a commentary gleaned from a multiplicity of sources within the Jewish tradition and a section of interpretations of the general themes of the readings. I wish that the citation of sources would have been more exact (perhaps in a listing of sources at the back) to make it possible for a person to follow up a given citation, but the wealth of material confirms that the editors certainly were serious in their attempt to highlight study in these prayerbooks. At the same time, they do not belittle the prayer experience; on the contrary, their felicitous translations and inspirational readings encourage those who do not know traditional Jewish liturgy to make their way into it, while at the same time affording new meaning to that liturgy for those who have recited it for years. Moreover, the sections on home rituals, in both the *Siddur* and the *Mahzor*, together with the words to a number of songs appropriate to various occasions, give concrete evidence of the editors' intention to transfer prayer as well as study to the home.

In addition to these general aspects of these prayerbooks, as one reads them cover to cover one notices several other characteristics. The *Siddur* begins with Sabbath services and only gets to the weekday services after that. Does that mean that the people for whom the book is intended are not likely to pray daily?

The *Siddur* includes six alternative Sabbath morning services, up to the *Amidah*, each with a general theme (Tradition; Life and Death; The Future; The Just Society; The Community; The Family of Israel), and the additional readings for the Torah service are numbered to correspond with the thematic introductions to the services. There is, however, no *Musaf* service at all. Clearly, this prayerbook is not designed for North America's hordes of latecomers!

The lack of *Musaf* is apparently due to a strong conviction on the part of the editors that a restoration of the ancient Temple service is not desirable, although that does not find expression or explanation in their Preface or Introduction. Such a conviction may have motivated the elimination of the Priestly Blessing in all services, but since it normally is recited by the cantor, one wonders, despite its cultic origins, why it was dropped. The editors' objections to the Temple sacrifices probably also explain their rewriting the first two clauses of the *Rezeh* paragraph in the *Amidah* to exclude all mention of both the Temple and the sacrifices:

Lord our God, be pleased with Your people Israel and listen to their prayers. In Your great mercy delight in us so that Your presence may rest upon Zion. Our eyes look forward to Your return to Zion in mercy! Blessed are You Lord, who restores His presence to Zion.

There is an "*Amidah* for Special Occasions," but it is not clear how that is to be used since it contains paragraphs for Friday evenings, Saturday mornings (*Shaharit*), and Saturday afternoons—all services whose *Amidah* is already printed in the appropriate sections of the prayerbook. In any case, *Musaf* does not appear in this *Siddur*.

The North American Conservative Movement, which affirmed a similar conviction on the matter of the sacrifices in the publication of the *Sabbath and Festival Prayerbook* in 1946 and has continued to do so in its new *Siddur Sim Shalom*, has handled this issue more conservatively—and, I think, better—by retaining *Musaf* but changing the verbs to the past tense. Rather than being a prayer for a renewed sacrificial service in a restored Temple in Jerusalem, *Musaf* thus becomes a reminder of the special devotion that was expressed by our ancestors through their additional sacrifices on Sabbaths and Festivals. That preserves an important link to the past as well as fulfilling the Jewish legal requirement to recite *Musaf*. Similarly, *Rezeh* is changed less radically—but less consistently—in Conservative prayerbooks:

Accept the prayer of Your people as lovingly as it is offered. Restore worship to Your sanctuary. May the worship of Your People Israel always be acceptable to You. May we witness Your merciful return to Zion. Praised are You, Lord who restores His Presence to Zion.

Which sanctuary is being referred to? Here, I believe, the British have the better version.

The editors apparently also have difficulties with the second and third paragraphs of the *Shema*. Again, unfortunately, the reason is not explained, but one can guess that their problem with the second paragraph is the failure of reward to correspond to virtue and, here less certainly, their objection to the third paragraph may be its lack of inspirational value. In any case, sometimes they simply substitute two other sections of the Bible (not necessarily the Torah), and sometimes they retain the two usual paragraphs but adduce two other paragraphs as

an alternative. In fact, throughout these volumes, a variety of selections appear as suggested alternatives, chosen, I imagine, to fit as closely as possible with the occasion of reciting the prayer. While this eliminates the theological problem in the second paragraph and takes advantage of the centrality of the *Shema* to teach other sections of the Bible, this reader wonders whether it is wise to change such a fundamental prayer in the liturgy—especially, as happens on occasion in the *Siddur*, if one does not even indicate that the reader can read the traditional paragraphs on another page.

Other changes in the liturgy are, for this reader, less objectionable and often sensitively done. For example, *Malkhuyot*, *Zikhronot*, and *Shofarot*, the three middle sections of *Musaf* for *Rosh Hashanah*, are, in the traditional liturgy, each based upon ten verses from the Bible, three from each of the parts of the Hebrew Bible and then a tenth from the Torah. The Talmud must extend the meaning of some verses considerably to make this structure work, particularly in the *Malkhuyot* (Kingship) verses. This *Mahzor* (pp. 2230–2233), instead, uses citations from the biblical, rabbinic, hasidic, and modern Jewish literature which are unquestionably on point.

While the Reform prayerbooks shorten the liturgy, they generally preserve the traditional structure of prayer. So, for example, the paragraphs accompanying the first blessing before *Shema*, which describe the reactions of the heavenly beings to God's creation, have been eliminated. Apparently the editors felt that most contemporary Jews can no longer relate to that imagery, and they may well be right. Similarly, the paragraphs preceding the blessing after *Shema* in the traditional liturgy have been condensed into several lines—again, in this reader's opinion, without loss of meaning or impact.

There are however, some omissions which are more troubling. In traditional practice, the evening *Amidah* is not repeated. To mark Friday evening as special, traditional liturgy includes several paragraphs and a blessing after the silent *Amidah* as a substitution for the absent, communal rendition of the *Amidah*. For some undisclosed reason, the editors have eliminated that section.

The opening, morning blessings do not appear in five of the six Sabbath services, and this reader felt their absence. Moreover, in the daily service and the one Sabbath service (II) in which they do appear, the first six blessings are omitted. The Conservative Movement in North America changed the negative formulation of the second, third, and fourth blessings to a positive form so as not to insult non-Jews or women, and that seems like a better solution to any ideological problems which these blessings raise in the minds of some. The rationale for eliminating other blessings, though, is obscure. Have the editors dropped the blessings describing God as "opening the eyes of the blind" (which we all are during sleep) for fear of offending blind people? Then why include

the blessing describing God as one who “lifts up those who are bent low” if that might offend hunchbacks? In general, the omissions here are unexplained and ill-advised.

Pesukei D'zimra, the introductory readings designed to put one in the mood to pray, are radically reduced in size. In light of the ample readings throughout the *Siddur* which one can readily add, that is perfectly proper. In many of the six Sabbath services, however, this section lacks an opening blessing or a closing one, and that puts it in liturgical limbo.

There is no mention in the Sabbath afternoon service of a Torah reading. The editors may have intended one but simply neglected to indicate where to turn for the Torah service. This is a general problem in this *Siddur*: there is a lack of sufficient instructions as to how to use it. *Hallel*, for example, is printed as part of the Psalm Anthology, with no mention in the Table of Contents and no reference after the *Amidah* for Sabbaths or weekdays to alert readers to read it on the Intermediate Days of Festivals and New Moons. In a synagogue service, the rabbi can have worshippers turn to the proper pages to say what needs to be included, but one cannot assume that each Jew will know to do that when praying privately—a serious obstacle to achieving the editors’ goal of making prayer possible in the home as well as the synagogue.

The opening paragraph for *Musaf* on *Rosh Hashanah* (pp. 224–5) conflates the themes of the first two blessings into one paragraph and omits the two blessings. This is not done on *Yom Kippur* (pp. 456–7), and one wonders why it was done on *Rosh Hashanah*. Moreover, why were the second and third last blessings of the *Amidah* omitted in that service (pp. 242–3)? Including these sentences, as required by Jewish law, would certainly not add appreciably to the length of the service.

There are also some curious insertions. In the Friday evening service, there is a *Kedushah*, a part of the *Amidah* which is said only when the *Amidah* is repeated as a community. Apparently, this prayer book assumes a practice of repeating the *Amidah* on Friday night, a fact which would explain the presence of the *Kedushah* and the absence of the paragraphs and blessing following the *Amidah* in traditional Friday evening liturgy. That, however, is a highly unusual practice.

In the morning service for weekdays, the High Holydays, and all six versions for the Sabbath, the blessing of God for “commanding us to devote ourselves to the study of His teaching” (*V’zivanu la’asok b’divre Torah*) appears in the middle of *Pesukei D'zimra*. The blessing is certainly traditional, and beautiful to boot, but its placement there interrupts the sense and flow of these readings that are designed to get us in the mood to pray.

There is a clear universalist tendency in these prayerbooks. So, for example, the blessing in the *Amidah* that acknowledges God as He who “heals the sick of His People Israel” is, instead, in both the Hebrew and

English renditions of this *Siddur* (pp. 234–5), simply He who “heals the sick,” The Reform version retains the blessing of God as “the support and safety of the righteous,” but the paragraph accompanying that blessing has been rewritten. Instead of asking God’s compassion for “the righteous, the pious, the leaders of Your People, the House of Israel, the remnant of their sages, faithful proselytes, and us,” this *Siddur* (pp. 237–8) invokes God’s mercy on “the righteous, the pious, and the honest, to those who join us in righteousness, and us ourselves.”

This leads to a softening of the liturgical commitment to Israel. So, for example, in the paragraph before *Shema*, the prayer of the traditional liturgy that God “bring us in peace from the four corners of the earth and lead us to our land” has been dropped from the morning liturgy on all occasions. Similarly, in the weekday *Amidah*, the traditional liturgy says this:

Sound the great ram’s horn for our freedom, raise high the banner to gather all our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Praised are You, Lord, who gathers the dispersed of His people Israel.

These words have been replaced in this *Siddur* by:

Sound the great horn for our freedom, and speedily may the voice of liberty be heard in the cities of our lands, for you are a God who redeems and rescues. Blessed are You Lord, who redeems His people Israel in mercy.

The blessing of God who “builds Jerusalem” has been retained. The traditional liturgy, however, preceded it with these words:

Have mercy, Lord, and return to Jerusalem, Your city. May Your Presence dwell there as You have promised. Build it now, in our days and for all time. Reestablish there the majesty of David, Your servant.

In contrast, both the Hebrew and the English versions of that paragraph in the Reform *Siddur* (pp. 236–7) read:

Turn in mercy to Jerusalem and may Your presence dwell within it. Rebuild the city of righteousness soon in our days, and may it be a centre of prayer for all people.

These points should not be exaggerated. The *Siddur* and *Maḥzor* both contain prayers for the State of Israel (although not the Chief Rabbinate’s prayer), and there is a special liturgy for Israel Independence Day. Moreover, in the *Alenu* prayer, the line which some find offensive for its national chauvinism—i.e., that God “has not made our portion like that of others, nor our lot like that of all the nations”—is not simply dropped but is rather replaced by “who has chosen us from all peoples by giving us His Torah,” the same words that are used before reading the Torah. Thus, there are elements of both particularism and commitment to Israel in these volumes, but they are more muted than in the traditional liturgy.

The Introduction to the *Mahzor* takes note of the new sensitivity to masculine and feminine language to describe both human beings and God but says that "This revision has retained masculine terms and masculine designations for God, because at the time of revision there were no others in normal use." Even so, the editors did try, to some extent, to act on this concern. In addition to the traditional prayer addressed to "Our Father, our King," the *Mahzor* includes (pp. 158–161) a similar prayer invoking "Our God in Heaven." As the Introduction promises, women authors are cited extensively in the many readings.

Despite the reservations that I have discussed, I genuinely like these prayerbooks. They combine creativity and sensitivity with a firm grounding in the tradition. The inclusions in the *Mahzor* of readings for each day of *Elul* to prepare for the High Holydays; a *Selikhot* service which preserves the essentials but is not too long; beautiful interweavings of the morning blessings (pp. 176–7), the prayer "Who are we?" (p. 356), and *Ashamnu* with English expansions of their themes; a calendar of readings on repentance for the Ten Days of Repentance; a section on home rituals for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*; and an incredibly rich collection of readings for prayer and study all make the *Mahzor* an unusually fine piece of work. The extensive collection of readings and songs in the *Siddur*, together with its apt and innovative versions of traditional liturgy, make it truly a book which contemporary Jews who are committed to making the Jewish tradition live for them can use profitably in both synagogue and home. The chairman of the Prayer Book committee wrote (*Siddur*, p. x):

This volume goes out with the fervent hope and prayer that it will deepen the faith of our people, strengthen ties of affection and concern among us, and keep the spark of holiness alive in our synagogues, our home, and ourselves.

These books are certainly important contributions to those ends.

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The Meaning of Jewish Destiny

Hazon Ve-Shivro. By HERTZEL FISHMAN. Jerusalem. Posner and Sons, 1987. 542 pp. (Hebrew).

Reviewed by GILBERT S. ROSENTHAL

HERTZEL FISHMAN is a multi-faceted person with a remarkably varied background. Raised in a Zionist, Hebrew-speaking family in a small community in America, he was brought to Israel as a lad to become a *halutz*, receive his education and, eventually, serve in the *Haganah*. He then trained in America as a Conservative rabbi and subsequently occupied several pulpits. He went on to develop an experimental camp for gifted children and took higher degrees in political science. Ultimately, Fishman returned to his beloved Jerusalem to work as a writer, educator, Zionist gadfly and critic of Jewish and Israeli life. All of his life he has wrestled, Jacob-like, with such questions as: What is Judaism? What is the mission of the Jewish people? What is the nature of Zionism and the Jewish State? In this, his magnum opus and distillation of a lifetime of thinking and working, Fishman tries to offer his answers and present his strategy. The title in English is *The Meaning of Jewish Destiny*. The Hebrew title is tantalizingly ambiguous and a *double entendre*: *Hazon Ve-Shivro* means "Vision and its Destruction;" but *Hazon Ve-Sivro* means "Vision and its Hope."* The

*The title may also be given a third interpretation! In rabbinic Hebrew, *shebher* means, literally, the breaking open of a dream, hence, "the interpretation of a dream." Thus, Fishman's title may, therefore, possibly be read as "The Vision and Its (True) Meaning." (Ed.)

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author devotes almost 400 pages of text and over 120 pages of densely-packed notes to dealing with the vision of our people, its mission, its religion, Jewish norms and values, and the State of Israel.

Fishman's thesis can be briefly summarized in several paragraphs. He complains that we have yet to develop a "national ethos" to give the State of Israel a national purpose and direction. The purpose of a Jewish State is not just to bring Jews to Israel, not merely to protect democracy, and certainly not to safeguard individual political and economic rights. Its purpose, preeminently, is to safeguard Jewish culture, moral values and peoplehood (p. 9). The average Israeli serves in the army, pays taxes, speaks Hebrew, even knows a smattering of the Bible—but, thanks to the bankruptcy of Israeli education, he knows little of Judaism, Jewish values and vocabulary, or authentic Jewish life.

It is incumbent on Israel, therefore,

to establish in Eretz Yisrael an exemplary society, a treasure people, a priestly kingdom and a holy nation that will serve as a light to the nations in keeping with the Sinaitic covenant (p. 11).

The goal of the State of Israel is to foster a sense of the *community* over the *individual*; no other means will stem the appalling rate of emigration from Israel and the alienation of Israelis from world Jewry and historic values. The State of Israel must foster a generation of Jews who are passionately committed to the "idealistic nature of our national existence" and will advance the holiness of the human being and the sanctity of life. The State is not an *end* in itself but a *means* to bringing about a better society.

Fishman strongly rejects the notion that we are a "normal people

in a normal state," for that spells the death knell of the Zionist dream. If we want to be *authentic* Jews who are trustees of an authentic claim to Eretz Yisrael, we must honor the Sinaitic *brit* (covenant) and live up to the demand to be a "priest people and a holy nation" for "authentic, historical Judaism is essentially religious." Finally, we need less Jewish sloganeering and sociology and more Jewish ideology if we are to fulfill our noble mission.

In eighteen chapters Fishman proceeds to spin out his theory and to criticize the various approaches to Zionism and Jewish life. He sees secularism as a perversion of the religious crucible in which our people was forged. He assails "religious Jews" (*datim*) who care only for *mizvot* between man and God and are not loath to hurt a fellowman or cheat the government. He does insist on a belief in God (no matter how we conceive of a Deity) as the source of Israel's mission, the underpinnings of the State of Israel, and the sanctity of all humans (pp. 43 ff.). Of course, he denounces religious fanaticism, whether rock-throwing against fellow Jews or assaults on innocent Arabs, as aberrations. He insists that we need *mizvot* such as Shabbat and Yom Tov to imbue us with a unique character and experience, a point missed by Israeli educators who have stressed "knowledge without experience" (p. 81). At the same time, he calls on the sages of Israel to show the courage of the ancients who were guided by the principle "and you shall live by these laws" (pp. 82 ff.).

Fishman ponders how to deal with the Arabs and their claim to Eretz Yisrael. He argues that only via the religious medium, including the Bible, prayers, laws, customs, festivals, historical memories, poems, sermons, symbols and legends, can we justify our ancient

claim to the Land. Only *we*, after all, have made it *the* holy place; only *we* have made it bloom (p. 95). But he maintains that we cannot settle in Arab areas and hope for peace on the one hand or the preservation of a "Jewish nation" on the other. Neither the Gush Emunim nor the followers of Meir Kahane will find much support in Fishman's thesis, which was written before the recent Arab *intafada* (riots) and which has sadly proved all too accurate.

The author spares no targets. He lashes out at secularism and socialism for stripping Judaism of its authentic roots and for their moral bankruptcy (pp. 130–137). He assails Zionists who conceive of the State as merely a "refuge for saving bodies but not souls" (pp. 146 f.). He flays the religious establishment and chief rabbis as perversions of religion (chapter 9) and favors civil marriage, and he analyzes the various modern religious movements in Judaism (chapter 10), exposing their strengths and weaknesses. He insists that religion must be a unifying, not a divisive, force in Jewish life and that only via personal example will religious leaders attract secular Jews (p. 186).

Fishman critiques Revisionist Zionism and Socialist Zionism in two chapters (fifteen and sixteen) and reveals more scorn for Revisionism, which he views as merely individual fulfillment at the expense of the group (the *perat* over the *k'lal*). But he rebukes Socialist Zionism for ignoring Jewish values, confusing the notion of "Israeli" and "Jew," while stressing the need for a "normal" state as the end rather than the means of the Zionist movement. He does, however, pay homage to members of *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* as the "jewels in the crown of the State." Who, then, are true Zionists? In Fishman's system, they are not people

who support Israel through political action or checks; they are men and women who act in a Jewish way, educate their children Jewishly, dedicate their private lives to Jewish values, participate in Jewish culture, and ultimately go on *aliyah* to Israel, submerging the quest for personal gain to the greater good of the community (pp. 248 ff.). The tragedy is that most Israelis are not Zionists because most of them came to the land out of compulsion, in order to save their lives from European or Arab anti-Semitism. Consequently, they lack ideological commitment to Zionism, and Israeli education has failed to fill the vacuum. This explains the lack of national purpose and the painful problem of *yeridah* (emigration). If the passion for personal comfort ("bigger apartments, two cars," etc.) supersedes the needs of the group and the State, no wonder that Israel is morally bankrupt (pp. 262 ff.).

It is unfortunate, says the author, that Israel has been so preoccupied with survival and internal and external problems. Otherwise, Israel could have devoted its genius and efforts to realizing the highest moral values and principles, the sanctity of all humans, the improvement of humanity, a goal-oriented society, mutual cooperation, and the like, all of which can be achieved only in a sovereign Jewish nation (pp. 277 ff.).

Is there a solution to these

dilemmas? Fishman, the educator, believes that only by revising the Israeli educational system and creating Zionist *havurot* can we create a national ethos and learn love of our homeland and respect for the government, its laws and all of its people (pp. 365–387). Naturally, this will require radical rethinking and restructuring in Zionist and Jewish educational circles.

Fishman's book is too long and often repetitive. It is replete with long quotations from Aḥad Ha'am, Beryl Katznelson, Eliezer Schweid, and many others. (Curiously, Menachem Begin, Abba Eban and other Zionist worthies are never quoted.) It will anger many, I fear. Zionists will accuse Fishman of betrayal; secularists will denounce him as a religionist, while the religionists will accuse him of heresy. The educational establishment will be incensed; the leadership elite will scorn him. Who will support him? Those of us who truly believe that we are and must be a unique people, that *Medinat Yisrael* is not destined to be just another "normal" state, that the Sinaitic *brit* must still guide us through history. And I do believe that we are the majority of committed Jews in the world.

This great work by a brilliant and learned thinker must be translated into English and other languages. It must be read, studied, taught, analyzed. Above all, it must be lived. Then the vision will not fail; rather, it will be realized and achieved.



How German Jewry Changed

The Transformation of German Jewry 1780–1840. By DAVID SORKIN. Oxford University Press. 1987. 255 pages.

Reviewed by LOTHAR KAHN

GERMAN JEWRY, in history and in its time, has been a visible Jewry. Its unparalleled contributions to world culture, its rich offering of alternatives in Jewish philosophy and its tragic finale have stimulated a reenforced interest in its uniqueness. What is perhaps most intriguing about the now nearly closed chapter in German-Jewish history was the failure of this brilliant, highly educated and cultured Jewry to recognize the situation in which it found itself throughout its past, to assess its status correctly, and to understand adequately the dynamics of the unwritten emancipation pact which it thought it had struck with the host people. Now along comes David Sorkin, a teacher of Modern Jewish History at Oxford University, who delves very deeply, perhaps too deeply, into the first sixty years of the emancipation struggle and outlines with keen insight and perception the tangled relationship between Jews and those German-speaking lands which later—much later—were to constitute the German Empire. The establishment of that Empire coincided, oddly enough, with the end of the emancipation struggle and with the nominal recognition of Jews as equals. If I say that Sorkin may have delved too deeply into the modern origins of the German-Jewish socio-cultural relationship, I am thinking mainly of the reader with a strong, but

non-professional interest in German-Jewish history. For this is a work on the highest levels of intellectual maturity which presupposes a considerable knowledge of German history, of internal Jewish history, and of the interaction between them.

The nature of that relationship, Sorkin argues, remained “essentially invisible to its own members and to subsequent generations.” They were not aware of the ingredients that had given it birth and which impacted on future developments. Two principal changes in the development of Germany and of her Jews wrought a distinct revolution: internal changes in the princely states made it possible to end the Jews’ feudal status as an autonomous community and then to initiate a seemingly never-ending process of political emancipation which brought with it a major social transformation. There was another equally significant aspect to this revolution. As the Jews established their nexus with the surrounding German culture, they generated a cultural productivity that had had only two precursors: the symbiosis of Greco-Jewish contacts 1800 years earlier and the Muslim-Jewish symbiosis during the Golden Age of Spain.

Sorkin parts with the view which is dominant, especially among American historians, that the freeing of the German Jews and their contact with German life and culture led to a Jewish surrender of identity and to the most complete assimilation that had been attempted in Jewish history. According to him, the two-faceted revolution did not lead to assimilation at all—though superficially it might be taken for that—but to the evolution of a new Jewish identity and concept of community. What resulted was, in fact, the creation of a dynamic subculture which could be credited with the

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achievements that have already been mentioned.

There was a less felicitous side to the emergence of this distinctive subculture: it did not recognize itself as different from the dominant surrounding culture of the German majority. Sliding into this error of self-perception was made easy by the fact that the subculture was built on the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the ideal of Emancipation. Initially, the sub-group was a minority component of the Jews of Germany, most of whom were still tradition-bound and distrustful of the new-fangled ideas which the educated Jewish citizenry—nearly all belonging to a bourgeoisie that made of *Bildung* an ideal—was dangling before their eyes. But, by the time that full emancipation was finally achieved in 1871, the subculture was no longer a struggling minority group. It represented, Sorkin tells us, the majority of German Jewry who had now risen into the bourgeoisie. The twofold Revolution, a product of socio-political changes in the German states, the emergence of a general and Jewish bourgeoisie with education and self-formation as its *summum bonum*, with a general Enlightenment embodied by the works of Lessing and a Jewish Enlightenment, the Haskalah, with Moses Mendelssohn and disciples like the clearheaded Wessely and the wellintentioned but muddleheaded David Friedländer as spearheads, had created, over an eighty year period, “a German-Jewish identity and a German-Jewish community of an unanticipated sort.” Sorkin is ready to proclaim the history of postemancipation German Jewry “. . . consequently a history of its subculture.”

In the closing decades of the last century a new and rabid anti-Semitism emerged, for the first time with clearly racial overtones but not

without political ones as well, and the sub-group found itself under attack for its alleged solidarity. It had, therefore, to revert to its old unifying factor, that of religion, and refute all else. By now, however, as anti-Semitic demagogues made their presence felt without fear and inhibition, the collective need to combat the new anti-Semitism came to be of compelling importance. Sorkin does not see the need for adding this fact: the sub-group failed to realize that the ideals of the Enlightenment on which its identity and progress were based had lost their one-time power and attractiveness in Germany and had been displaced by new idols. The cosmopolitan ideals of the Enlightenment, the notions of an aristocracy of merit and achievement, had yielded to ideas of superior blood and race, of bonding with the soil. The decent, educated, philosophically-based ideal had given way to the Prussian officer and the concept of strength and power which he symbolized. The Jewish subculture, like the Germans who had helped shape it, failed to realize that Goethe and Schiller were still given lip service but had long ago ceased to represent what newer Germans had come to recognize as true symbols of greatness. While these negative aspects of German culture developed mostly after 1870, the ideals of the Enlightenment had already substantially weakened during the period of Sorkin's main study, certainly with the advent of German Romanticism around 1815.

Sorkin's theory is too involved to encapsulate adequately in a few pages. In fact, it often appears so involved as to defy clear description without leaving out significant details and allowing loose ends. Like all proponents of new theories—and Sorkin's is both new and significant—he leaves out or

minimizes those aspects that would tend to weaken the theory or allow legitimate question marks at the end. He finds much support for his theories in the philosophic writings of the time, especially David Fränkel and his program of regeneration; the status and expectations of Berthold Auerbach; Gabriel Riesser's advocacy of emancipation through the educational and moral regeneration of the Jews. Whether he would not have found a less homogenized picture were he to look at other figures of the second post-Mendelssohnian generation is a question that must seriously be asked. Sorkin seems to address those facets of German-Jewish culture that lend support to his doctrines; he is perhaps guilty of ignoring lesser figures, proponents of a more popular culture, who don't fit into his theory; not even Heine and Börne, the former dead only in 1856, the latter in 1836, are allowed to intrude into Sorkin's ambitious scheme.

He is particularly strong in his discussion of those Enlightenment concepts that Jews found in German culture and, later, their use of institutional forms of popular culture in German life, such as the sermon and the lecture. Also intriguing is his analysis of German journals from the late 18th and

early 19th century and the influence that they had on the contributors of *Hameasseph* and *Sulamith*. Yet, in spite of clearly evolving common denominators, Jews failed to recognize in themselves a distinct subculture such as had not developed in England at one end of the spectrum or Czarist Russia on the other.

Unlike its Russian and English counterparts (Sorkin concludes), German Jewry experienced the particular configuration of facts that made a subculture possible. As a socially differentiated, autonomous community confronting an absolute state, German Jewry generated a *Haskala*. Under the impact of emancipation quid pro quo, it transformed the *Haskala* into an ideology of emancipation. And under the combined conditions of its incomplete emancipation and partial integration on the one side, and its own transformation into an increasingly homogeneous bourgeoisie on the other, it used the ideology to create a subculture.

This is a dazzlingly brilliant, complex and at times abstruse work. It may reorient German as well as Jewish historical thinking, but its very brilliance and originality inherently limit its appeal and, perhaps, its impact.

Some Books Worth Noting

Bible

Halpern, Baruch. *The First Historians*. The Hebrew Bible and History. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. xv + 285 pp., \$22.95.

The Bible as literature, as a compendium of *mizvot*, as a proof of archaeology—all of these are approaches which have long been with us. In this book, the author looks at the Bible as history and has as his aim “to determine what ancient Israelite historians thought history demanded.” He concludes, “it is our task to get back into the mental state of the historian’s ideal audience, the sophisticates who shared the historian’s assumptions and who therefore stood open to be persuaded by his logic.” All of this Halpern does through the analysis of various Biblical episodes from a fresh point of view.

Josipovici, Gabriel. *The Book of God*. A Response to the Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. xv + 350pp., \$29.95.

The author’s responses are to such questions as: Is it the work of one author or is it an anthology? What kind of book is it? Is there any unity in it? Using close textual analysis and drawing upon an excellent background in both medieval and modern art and literature, Josipovici offers a wholly fresh look at The Book.

Biography

Lifton, Betty Jean. *The King of the Children*. A Biography of Janusz Korczak. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988. 404 pp., \$22.50.

To be more accurate, the title of this book should have been the “Father” and not the “King.” Korczak established in Poland the first progressive orphanage for Jewish and Catholic children, founded a children’s newspaper and was a staunch advocate of the legal rights of children. When, in August, 1942, he was ordered by the Nazis to present the two hundred orphans in his care to the train for Treblinka, he did so, and went along with them, all of them to die together.

Stanislawski, Michael. *For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. 263 pp., \$35.00.

A leading exponent of the Jewish Enlightenment in Russia, A.D. Gordon was, to mix the metaphors, a Renaissance man: poet, journalist, dramatist, liberal, communal leader, Zionist. All of these concerns, and many more, are treated in this biography which analyses the life and the work of the subject.

Erez Yisrael

Ben-Arieh, Yehoshua. *Jerusalem in the 19th Century*. Emergence of the New City. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. xiii + 509 pp., \$29.95.
Shepherd, Naomi. *The Zealous Intruders*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. 282 pp., \$19.95.

Who came to the Holy Land in the nineteenth century and why did they come?

These two volumes deal with that question from different points of view. The one by Shepherd looks at the extraordinary individuals, as well as the ordinary ones, who came to the land to settle, to tour, to explore, while the book by Ben-Arieh focuses more narrowly on Jerusalem and, particularly, on the new city. (An earlier book of his dealt with the old city.)

In both of these books, biography and history are intermingled to give fascinating insights into what was developing just a century ago.

History

Ashtor, Eliyahu. *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, vol. 3. Tr. from the Hebrew by Aaron Klein and Jenny Machlowitz Klein. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984. 310 pp.

In this concluding work of the three-volume series on the subject, Ashtor moves from the Golden Age of Hebrew writing in Moslem Spain to the end of Moslem rule and the advent of Christian rulers. The religious conflicts that were in the air affected Jewish life and they are particularly reflected, as are details of private life, in the chapter which deals with the diary of a Jew in eleventh-century Spain.

Yordim

Shokeid, Moshe. *Children of Circumstances*. Israeli Emigrants in New York. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988. xiii + 226 pp. \$28.50.

People who frequently use New York taxis have been known to comment that a knowledge of Hebrew is of great value in getting to their destination. Israeli emigrants, who have built their "new Jerusalem" predominantly in the borough of Queens, are the subjects of this study, which is a combination of sociology, cultural anthropology and compassion. Not all of the *yordim* had similar motives for coming to this country, not all are adjusted (or maladjusted) to life here. Some have succeeded financially, some have moved to the religious right, some are completely integrated and a few have gone back. Shokeid presents a picture of fellow Jews (and former countrymen) that is highly illuminating.

R.B.W.

JUDAISM

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